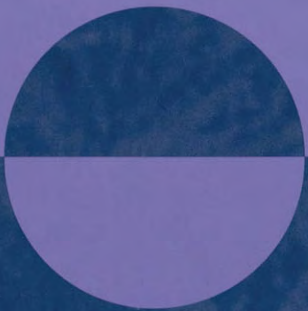
space, place, AND gender



DOREEN MASSEY

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University of Minnesota Press
Minneapolis

First published in 1994 by Polity Press
in association with Blackwell Publishers.

Published simultaneously in 1994 in the United States by
University of Minnesota Press
2037 University Avenue Southeast
Minneapolis, MN 55455-3092

Third printing 2001

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Massey, Doreen B.
Space, place, and gender / Doreen Massey.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references (p.) and index.
ISBN 0-8166-2616-2 (hc : acid-free paper). — ISBN 0-8166-2617-0 (pbk. : acid-free paper)
1. Human geography. 2. Spatial behavior. 3. Space and time. 4. Sex role. 5. Social interaction. 6. Personal space. 7. Feminist theory. I. Title.
GF95.M37 1994
304.2'3--dc20 94-10955

Contents

Acknowledgements

'Industrial restructuring versus the cities', written with Richard Meegan, first appeared in *Urban Studies* (1978), vol. 15, pp. 273–88, and is published by kind permission of Carfax Publishing Company. 'In what sense a regional problem?' first appeared in *Regional Studies* (1979), vol. 13, pp. 233–43, and is published by kind permission of the Regional Studies Association. The paper was originally presented to a Regional Studies Association conference entitled 'The death of regional policy'. 'The shape of things to come' first appeared in *Marxism Today*, April 1983, pp. 18–27. 'Uneven development: social change and spatial divisions of labour' first appeared in *Uneven Re-Development: Cities and Regions in Transition* edited by Doreen Massey and John Allen and published by Hodder & Stoughton in association with the Open University (1988), pp. 250–76; it is published here by kind permission of Hodder & Stoughton and the Open University. 'The political place of locality studies' first appeared in *Environment and Planning A* (1991), vol. 23, pp. 267–81, and is published by kind permission of Pion Press Limited. 'A global sense of place' first appeared in *Marxism Today*, June 1991, pp. 24–9. 'A place called home?' first appeared in *New Formations* (1992) no. 17, pp. 3–15, and is published by kind permission of Lawrence & Wishart. 'Space, place and gender' forms part of a public lecture delivered at the London School of Economics Gender Institute, which was first published in the *LSE Magazine*, spring 1992, pp. 32–4. 'A woman's place?', written with Linda McDowell, first appeared in *Geography Matters: a reader* edited by Doreen Massey and John Allen and published by Cambridge University Press in association with the Open University (1984), pp. 128–47; it is published

here by kind permission of Cambridge University Press and the Open University. 'Flexible sexism' first appeared in *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* (1991) vol. 9, pp. 31–57, and is published by kind permission of Pion Press. 'Politics and space/time' first appeared in *New Left Review* (1992) no. 196, November–December, pp. 65–84, and is published by kind permission of *New Left Review*. I should particularly like to thank Richard Meegan and Linda McDowell for agreeing to my including articles which were written jointly with them.

The articles collected here cover a considerable period. Over those years I have worked with and learned from a large number of people, both inside and beyond academe. I should especially like to thank Richard Meegan with whom much of the earlier work was done, when we were both working at the Centre for Environmental Studies, and my colleagues in geography at the Open University. A number of the articles were written in the context of courses for the OU, either directly as part of a course, or emerging from the constantly provocative discussions in 'course-team meetings'.

The period over which the articles were written (the late seventies to the present) was as a whole a fairly turbulent one. What is pleasing is that, from the early skirmishings with neo-classical location theory, through the debates over locality studies, to the more recent exchanges over post-modernism and feminism, disagreements in print have not overwhelmed personal friendships.

Finally, I should like to thank Rebecca Harkin of Polity for encouraging me to undertake this project, and Doreen Warwick of the Open University for her help with its physical production.

PART III

Space, Place and Gender

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Introduction

The intersections and mutual influences of 'geography' and 'gender' are deep and multifarious. Each is, in profound ways, implicated in the construction of the other: geography in its various guises influences the cultural formation of particular genders and gender relations; gender has been deeply influential in the production of 'the geographical'. There is now a very considerable literature in feminist geography which spans the range from attempts simply to get the issue on to the agenda to highly sophisticated theoretical and methodological arguments which should (though whether they will or not remains to be seen) change the very nature of geographical inquiry.[1] The opening paper in this part ('Space, place and gender') traces some of the developments which took place in the early years within feminist (or, more generally, gender-aware) approaches in that small corner of geography which deals with regional employment change and regional economic policy. As a group, the papers presented in this part explore just one or two threads within this increasingly complex field. The aim is to highlight some of the specific interconnections of geography and gender where these relate particularly to space and place. Some of the conceptual intersections between the terms have been highlighted in the general introduction; the notes here begin from rather more concrete connections. The influences run both ways.

In the first instance, and in what might be interpreted as yet a further extension of the theme that geography matters (for which, in a very general form, see also 'Politics and space/time'), is the argument that geography matters to gender. And it does so in a whole variety of ways.

One of the earliest observations highlighted by feminists within geography was that gender relations vary over space (it had long been recognized that they vary over time). Thus 'A woman's place?' (written with Linda McDowell) uses the views of space and place outlined in parts I and II to examine the variations in the construction, and the reconstruction over time, of gender relations in four different parts of the United Kingdom. The evidence of variation is dramatic (and this is just within one small country), and it is a variation which persists, although in continually altering form, up to this day. Moreover, to the four areas investigated in this paper could be added the high-technology-professional patriarchal gender relations being put in place right now in Cambridge – that is, in one of the symbolic sectors and places of 'the future' (see 'Space, place and gender', and 'Uneven development'). In other words, not just in the past but also today and not just across major cultural differences but also between quite closely related 'local cultures', gender relations can vary quite systematically.

The importance of the existence of this variable construction of gender relations in different local-cultural space/places, and the importance of documenting and analysing it, is not merely to revel once again in the fact of geographical variation. Rather it is that such a finding underlines even more sharply the necessity for a thoroughgoing theoretical anti-essentialism at this level (what it means to be masculine in the Fens is not the same as in Lancashire) and that that in turn undermines those arguments (whether they be in industrial location theory – those nimble fingers – or in gender politics more widely) which rely on attributions of characteristics as 'natural' to men and women. The demonstration of geographical variation adds yet another element to the range of arguments that these things are in fact socially constructed.

The complement of this is, of course, that geographical variations in the construction of gender relations also point, if in a relatively minor way compared with other axes of contrast, to the fact of differences among women (and indeed among men), not only in their construction as gendered people but also in the way in which they relate to particular political struggles, including those around gender itself. The discussion of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Lancashire in 'A woman's place?' focuses on an example of this, and an example in which the organization of space/place was of particular salience. On the one hand, the particular nature of the local economy, and the concentration and dominance there of certain parts of cotton-textile production, were a condition for the development and solidarity of the suffragette movement. On the other hand, when the battle in which they were engaged moved to national level (because of the necessity of parliamentary action) the regionally based

movement found itself relatively isolated. The demands which the women of Lancashire found so important either did not strike the same chord or could not be mobilized around in the same way in other parts of the country.

This links back to the wider argument about identity laid out in the general introduction. If identity is thought in terms of an articulation of the social relations in which a person/group is involved, as is proposed by Chantal Mouffe and Teresa de Lauretis among others (and as is here being extended to the concept of place), then (political) alliances have to be positively constructed across and between these varying articulations. However, the same reasoning implies that any one social relation may have distinct meanings and interpretations when combined into different articulations. Thus, in the case here the distinct articulations, in different regions, of gender relations with other social relations made the meaning of 'the gender issue' itself change form, and any assumption of easy alliances among women in different parts of the country was consequently untenable.[2]

But there are other ways, too, in which space and place are important in the construction of gender relations and in struggles to change them. From the symbolic meaning of spaces/places and the clearly gendered messages which they transmit, to straightforward exclusion by violence, spaces and places are not only themselves gendered but, in their being so, they both reflect and affect the ways in which gender is constructed and understood. The limitation of women's mobility, in terms both of identity and space, has been in some cultural contexts a crucial means of subordination. Moreover the two things – the limitation on mobility in space, the attempted consignment/confinement to particular places on the one hand, and the limitation on identity on the other – have been crucially related (see also the general introduction).

One of the most evident aspects of this joint control of spatiality and identity has been in the West related to the culturally specific distinction between public and private. The attempt to confine women to the domestic sphere was both a specifically spatial control and, through that, a social control on identity. Again, 'A woman's place?' illustrates this theme, by pointing to the specific (though not unique) importance of the *spatial separation* of home and workplace in generating dismay in certain quarters at women becoming 'economically active'. It was certainly not the only factor – the fact of women having access to an independent income was itself a source of anxiety – but in the comparison between Lancashire and Hackney it is clear that the fact of escape from the spatial confines of the home is in itself a threat (the reference to the dangers of 'gregarious employment' and the specific concern about travelling gangs in the

Fenlands case allude to the same phenomenon). And it was a threat in (at least) two ways: that it might subvert the willingness of women to perform their domestic roles and that it gave them entry into another, public, world – 'a life not defined by family and husband'.

The construction of 'home' as a woman's place has, moreover, carried through into those views of place itself as a source of stability, reliability and authenticity. Such views of place, which reverberate with nostalgia for something lost, are coded female.[3] Home is where the heart is (if you happen to have the spatial mobility to have left) and where the woman (mother, lover-to-whom-you-will-one-day-return) is also. The occasional idealizations of home by the working-class lads (the Angry Young Men) who came south in the middle decades of this century, and who looked back north with an unforgiveable romanticism, often constructed that view around 'Mum', not as herself a living person engaged in the toils and troubles and pleasures of life, not actively engaged in her own and others' history, but a stable symbolic centre – functioning as an anchor for others. Raymond Williams's *Border Country* has many of the same characteristics. In this way of looking at the world, the identities of 'woman' and of the 'home-place' are intimately tied up with each other. It is little wonder that Elizabeth Wilson's analysis leads her to conclude that as, over time, women in big cities were less and less easy to contain in heterosexuality and in the domestic sphere (and here of course capitalism and patriarchy have had an uneasy relationship) metropolitan life itself seemed to throw up such a threat to patriarchal control (see 'Politics and space/time'). In general terms what is clear is that spatial control, whether enforced through the power of convention or symbolism, or through the straightforward threat of violence, can be a fundamental element in the constitution of gender in its (highly varied) forms.

Moreover, the influences also run the other way. Gender has been deeply implicated in the construction of geography – geography as uneven development or regional variation and local specificity (and in the construction of these, not merely the fact of them), geography as an academic/intellectual discourse and set of social institutions,[4] and geography in terms of its founding concepts and systems of knowledge. In particular – the concern here – gender is of significance to geographical constructions of space and place.

Most simply perhaps, and as papers throughout this collection indicate, gender and the fact of spatial variation in gender relations are a significant component in an understanding of the organization and reorganization of the national economic space. In 'A woman's place?' to the more specifically economically and class-orientated analyses of earlier papers concerned

with the construction of place is articulated consideration of patriarchal relations. 'Capitalism' and 'patriarchy' are considered as autonomous and of equal weight. The question at issue is their mutual accommodation and the kinds of synthesis which result. The final paragraph in 'A woman's place?' brings together the intersection of local and global, of space and place, with the highly differentiated forms and forces of capitalist industrialism, with ethnicity and with the geographical variability of certain aspects of gender relations, in 1980s Hackney. Both 'A woman's place?' and 'Space, place and gender' argue that British industry has actively used geographical differences in systems of gender relations in attempts to remain competitive. It is not, therefore, just that spatial variation, and the use of it in industrial location, was important in the (ultimately vain) attempt to preserve certain elements of British Fordism within the national space (see the introduction to part I), but that it was a highly gendered spatial variation. It is not, in other words, just that geography matters but that it is a gendered geography which matters. And what that means in turn is that taking gender seriously produces a different analysis. Both 'Space, place and gender' and 'A woman's place?' make the same point in relation to the analysis and evaluation of regional policy. From the designation of the area to which it applied (and the significant non-designation of others), through the processes of spatial industrial change in which it became involved, through the greater and lesser attractions of particular areas for industrial investment, to the social and political response to the nature of the incoming investment, to the gradually evolving nature of the evaluation of the policy by politicians and academics – in all these ways, and probably many more, the story of the period of regional policy in the decade from the mid-1960s was a thoroughly gendered one. And recognizing *that* changes every aspect of our analysis of it and our response to it. Moreover, it is not only the actions and activities of capital to which such an analysis can be applied; the same points hold true for the labour movement, for instance. 'A woman's place?' instances a number of occasions in which the labour movement played a role in the local structuring of gender relations. And both 'Space, place and gender' and (in part I) 'The shape of things to come' argue that the resultant geography of gender relations, and the particular form it took in certain regions has come back to haunt the labour movement itself: 'it is interesting to speculate on the degree to which this highly patriarchal past has been one of the conditions for the threat currently posed to it . . . To the extent that it was complicit in the rigidity of the sexual division of labour in these [mining] regions, and in the exclusion of women from so many social activities, the old traditional heart of the (male) labour movement may well itself have been party to the creation of the new

super-cheap labour-forces industry was searching out in the sixties and seventies.' Moreover, this geography of gender relations was in turn an important element in the debate over whether there was 'a decline of the working class' and if so what form it was taking ('The political place of locality studies'). The symbolic association of 'old-fashioned patriarchy', a strong labour movement, and the declining sectors of the economy – and the concentration of this constellation of characteristics into certain parts of the country – became a significant vulnerability ('Space, place and gender').

This approach, therefore, underscores that it is necessary to understand not only class relations but also (for instance) gender relations as significant in the structuring of space and place, spaces and places. It is arguing that gender is not somehow a 'local' concern (and therefore, for reasons themselves associated with gender, to be seen of lesser importance) but that, along with other axes of the constructed divisions in the societies we currently inhabit, it takes its place in principle alongside other divisions, such as class, whose relative significance in practice needs to be evaluated in each particular context (see 'Flexible sexism').

But adopting such an approach has implications. It means that time–space compression, for example, and the way in which space, place and spatiality are experienced cannot be understood as simply the product of shifts in the nature of capital accumulation ('A global sense of place', and 'Flexible sexism'). It means that spatiality cannot be analysed through the medium of a male body and heterosexual male experience, but without recognizing these as important and highly specific characteristics, and then generalized to people at large ('Flexible sexism'). It means that some of the concepts central to recent debate need reconsideration in the light of gender specificity and oppressive gender constructions and relations. 'Modernity' and 'modernism' are cases in point ('Flexible sexism'), warranting reconsideration in terms of their definition (see, for instance, the arguments of *Feminist Arts News*), both in terms of the gendering of their spatialities and in terms of the gendered spaces in which they were formed.

Thus when Henri Lefebvre writes of the space of modernity he is concerned centrally with its very particular gendering and sexualization:

> Picasso's space *heralded* the space of modernity . . . What we find in Picasso is an unreservedly visualized space, a dictatorship of the eye – and of the phallus; an aggressive virility, the bull, the Mediterranean male, a *machismo* (unquestionable genius in the service of genitality) carried to the point of self-parody – and even on occasion to the point of self-criticism. Picasso's cruelty toward the body, particularly the female body, which he tortures in

> a thousand ways and caricatures without mercy, is dictated by the dominant form of space, by the eye and by the phallus – in short, by violence.[5]

And this space of modernity is based on a wider notion of 'abstract space' in which 'critical analysis ... is ... able to distinguish three aspects': the geometric, the optical (or visual) and the phallic.[6] Lefebvre's analysis traces the history of what he calls the male and female principles within transformations of space. This is not an essentialism, for he sees the content of these principles as 'differently formulated from one society to another'.[7] And one aspect which he traces in this history of space is the demise of the body, which he relates to the female principle but which – as here – he is critical of in its formulation of a simple dualism with a polar opposite of 'mind'. 'Over abstract space', he writes, 'reigns phallic solitude and the self-destruction of desire'.[8] The hegemonic spaces and places which we face today are not only products of forms of economic organization but reflect back at us also – and in the process reinforce – other characteristics of social relations, among them those of gender.

Notes

1 For an extremely thorough review of the literature, debates and developments within feminist geography in the UK, North America and the Antipodes see Linda McDowell's two contributions to *Progress in Human Geography*, vol. 17, 2 (1993), pp. 157–9, and vol. 17, 3 (1993), forthcoming. And for a challenging argument that the dominant nature of geographical inquiry in those regions is masculinist see Gillian Rose's *Feminism and Geography: The Limits of Geographical Knowledge* (Cambridge, Polity, 1993).

2 Once again, however, what is at issue here is a tension between generalities and the playing out of relations in specific situations. As Susan Bordo writes: 'gender never exhibits itself in pure form but in the context of lives that are shaped by a multiplicity of influences, which cannot be neatly sorted out. This doesn't mean, however ... that abstractions or generalizations about gender are methodologically illicit or perniciously homogenizing of difference' ('Feminism, postmodernism, and gender-scepticism', in Linda J. Nicholson (ed.), *Feminism/Postmodernism* (London, Routledge, 1990), pp. 133–56; here p. 50).

3 Gillian Rose also discusses this in ch. 4 of *Feminism and Geography*.

4 On 'geography' as an institution, and some of the practices of academic geography, see Linda McDowell and Linda Peake, 'Women in British geography revisited: or the same old story', *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, 14 (1990), pp. 19–30; and Linda McDowell, 'Sex and power in academia', *Area*, 22 (1990), pp. 323–32.

5 Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford, Blackwell, 1991; first pub-

lished in French in 1974). The quotation is from p. 302. It is perhaps worth noting that the many renderings and explications which there have been of the work of Lefebvre to an English-speaking geographical audience have almost all been blind to this matter, which is central to his argument and his politics, of space's gendering and its implicit but forceful sexuality.

6 Ibid., p. 285.

7 Ibid., p. 248.

8 Ibid., p. 309.

8

Space, Place and Gender

I can remember very clearly a sight which often used to strike me when I was nine or ten years old. I lived then on the outskirts of Manchester, and 'Going into Town' was a relatively big occasion; it took over half an hour and we went on the top deck of a bus. On the way into town we would cross the wide shallow valley of the River Mersey, and my memory is of dank, muddy fields spreading away into a cold, misty distance. And all of it – all of these acres of Manchester – was divided up into football pitches and rugby pitches. And on Saturdays, which was when we went into Town, the whole vast area would be covered with hundreds of little people, all running around after balls, as far as the eye could see. (It seemed from the top of the bus like a vast, animated Lowry painting, with all the little people in rather brighter colours than Lowry used to paint them, and with cold red legs.)

I remember all this very sharply. And I remember, too, it striking me very clearly – even then as a puzzled, slightly thoughtful little girl – that all this huge stretch of the Mersey flood plain had been entirely given over to boys.

I did not go to those playing fields – they seemed barred, another world (though today, with more nerve and some consciousness of being a space-invader, I do stand on football terraces – and love it). But there were other places to which I did go, and yet where I still felt that they were not mine, or at least that they were designed to, or had the effect of, firmly letting me know my conventional subordination. I remember, for instance, in my late teens being in an Art Gallery (capital A capital G) in some town across the Channel. I was with two young men, and we were hitching around

'the Continent'. And this Temple of High Culture, which was one of The Places To Be Visited, was full of paintings, a high proportion of which were of naked women. They were pictures of naked women painted by men, and thus of women seen through the eyes of men. So I stood there with these two young friends, and they looked at these pictures which were of women seen through the eyes of men, and I looked at them, my two young friends, looking at pictures of naked women as seen through the eyes of men. And I felt objectified. This was a 'space' that clearly let me know something, and something ignominious, about what High Culture thought was my place in Society. The effect on me of being in that space/place was quite different from the effect it had on my male friends. (I remember that we went off to a café afterwards and had an argument about it. And I lost that argument, largely on the grounds that I was 'being silly'. I had not then had the benefit of reading Griselda Pollock, or Janet Wolff, or Whitney Chadwick . . . maybe I really *was* the only person who felt like that . . .)

I could multiply such examples, and so I am sure could anyone here today, whether woman or man. The only point I want to make is that space and place, spaces and places, and our senses of them (and such related things as our degrees of mobility) are gendered through and through. Moreover they are gendered in a myriad different ways, which vary between cultures and over time. And this gendering of space and place both reflects *and has effects back on* the ways in which gender is constructed and understood in the societies in which we live.

When I first started 'doing geography' these things were just not talked about. What I want to do here is simply to give one example of how issues of gender began to creep into our subject matter. The example is perhaps quite mundane; it concerns empirical issues of regional development which are now well established in debate; but in spite of that some interesting lessons can be drawn.

The example, then, is from studies of regional employment in the United Kingdom. It concerns the story of the regional decentralization of jobs which took place in this country between the mid-1960s and the early 1970s. There are some facts which ought to be known before the story begins. This was a period largely of Labour government, with Harold Wilson as Prime Minister. There were major losses of jobs in coal mining, in the north-east of England, in south Wales and in central Scotland. It was the great era of regional policy, when there were numerous incentives and inducements to firms to invest in the regions where job loss was taking place. And it was also an era of the decentralization of jobs from the high employment areas of the south-east and the west midlands to these 'northern' regions of high *un*employment. And the question which

preoccupied many of us at that time was: how were we to put these facts together? Or, specifically, how were we to explain the decentralization of jobs to the regions of the north and the west?

The argument went through a series of stages. Or, at least, I shall present it as a series of stages – there are many occupants in what I label as the early stages who will doubtless disagree with what I say. Intellectual change is just not as linear as that.

The analysis, then, in 'stage one' was led primarily by people with computers and statistical packages, who correlated the timing and size of the decentralization of employment with the timing and distribution of regional policy. They found a high correlation between the two, and deduced that they were causally related: namely (although this was of course not directly shown by the statistics themselves) that regional policy was the cause of the decentralization of jobs. Thus regional policy, on this reading, was seen as having been quite successful.

But then came stage two. It was provoked by political rumblings of discontent, from male-dominated trade unions and local councils, and from evidence given to a parliamentary sub-committee. For jobs were not just jobs, it seemed: they were gendered. While the jobs which had been lost had been men's, the new jobs, arriving on the wave of decentralization, were largely being taken by women. And within academe, a whole new line of inquiry started as to *why* these jobs were for women. The answers which were found are now well known. Women workers were cheap; they were prepared to accept low wages, the result of years of negotiating in terms of 'the family wage'. Women were also more available than men for part-time work, an effect of the long established domestic division of labour within the household. Both of these reasons were characteristic of male/female relations, within the home and within the employment market, across the country. But some reasons were more specific, or at least more important, to these particular regions to which the jobs had been decentralized. Thus, the women in these regions had very low rates of organization into trade unions, a result of the very low levels of their previous incorporation into paid employment. The female economic activity rates there were indeed amongst the lowest in the country. These women, in other words, were classic 'green labour'.

With this development of the argument a slightly more complex story evolved which recognized some differences within the labour market, which recognized certain constraints and specificities of women as potential employees, which, in brief, recognized that women and women's jobs were different. Such a revised understanding led also to a revised evaluation of the effectivity of regional policy. It was now clearly necessary to be more muted in any claims for its success. There were two versions of this

re-evaluation. One, clearly sexist, persisted in its claim that the new jobs being made available in the regions should be criticized for being 'not real jobs', or for being 'only for women'. There was, however, also another form of re-evaluation, more academically respectable although still worrying in its implications: that the fact that the new jobs were for women was unfortunate in the sense that, because women's jobs were less well paid than were men's, aggregate regional income was still lower.

And yet there was a further stage in the development of this argument: stage three. For the more that one thought about it, the more the story seemed more complicated than that. Why, for example, had the economic activity rate for women in these regions been historically so low? This raised the whole question of local gender cultures. Many people, writing in both geography and sociology, commented upon the domestic labour burden of being a wife or mother to miners. They commented also on how the length and irregularity of shift-work made it problematical for the other partner in a couple also to seek paid employment outside the home. There was much detailed investigation of the construction of particular forms of masculinity around jobs such as mining. And all these investigations, and others besides, pointed to a deeper explanation of why, more than in most other regions of the country, there was in these areas a culture of the man being the breadwinner and of the women being the homemaker.

We had, in other words, moved through a series of approaches; from not taking gender into account at all, we had moved first to looking at women, and from there to looking at gender roles, men, and locally constructed gender relations. Moreover this gave us, once again, both a different story of what had happened and a different evaluation of regional policy. The new story was again more complicated and more nuanced. Harold Wilson had come to power in 1964 on a programme of modernizing social democracy, part of which centred on the rationalization of old industries such as coal mining. Contradictorily for him, however, the loss of jobs which would be consequent upon that rationalization would occur precisely in the regions which were his main geographical power base – regions such as the north-east of England, south Wales, and the central area of Scotland. In order, therefore, to proceed with this reconstruction of the old basic sectors of these regions, it was necessary to have as the other side of the deal a strong regional policy. Given this, acquiescence might be won from the trade unions and their members. However, it was the very fact that the men in the region were being made redundant which was important in creating the availability of female labour. For women were now for the first time in decades 'freed' on to the labour market. They needed paid employment, most particularly now in the absence of work for men, and there was less of a domestic labour burden upon them

restraining them from taking it. Moreover these women had been constructed over the years, precisely by the specificity of the local gender culture, into just the kind of workforce the decentralizing industries were looking for.

Moreover, there was yet again a different evaluation of regional policy. For regional policy could no longer be accepted as the single dominant factor in the explanation of decentralization of employment because the labour-force which had been part of the attraction to the incoming industries had been created not by regional policy but by the simultaneous decline of men's jobs and as a result of the previous gender culture. It certainly remained true that regional policy had brought with it only low-paid jobs, but on the other hand there were some positive aspects to the jobs it did bring, which previously had been unrecognized. Most importantly, it did bring some independent income for women, and for the first time in decades. Moreover, as the very fact of the initial complaints indicated, precisely by bringing in those jobs it began to disrupt some of the old gender relations. In other words, on this score (though not on many others) regional policy can be seen to have had some quite positive effects – though in a wholly different way from that initially claimed in stage one of the development of the argument.

There are a number of reflections which can be drawn from this story of a developing analysis. First, and most obviously, taking gender seriously produced a more nuanced evaluation of regional policy, a far better understanding of the organization and reorganization of our national economic space, and indeed – since these decentralizing industries were moving north to cut costs in the face of increasing international competition – it has shown us how British industry was actively *using* regional differences in systems of gender relations in an early attempt to get out of what has become the crisis of the British economy. Second, this understanding was arrived at not just by looking at women – although that was a start – but by investigating geographical variations in the construction of masculinity and femininity and the relations between the two. Feminist geography is (or should be) as much about men as it is about women. Third, moreover, the very focus on geographical variation means that we are not here dealing with some essentialism of men and women, but with how they are constructed as such.

The fourth reflection is a rather different one. It is easy now to look back and criticize this old-time patriarchy in the coalfields. Indeed it has become a stick with which to beat 'the old labour movement'. But that should not let us slide into an assumption that because the old was bad the new is somehow unproblematical. So, partly in response to the last three reflections (the need to look at men and masculinity, the importance

of recognizing geographical variations and of constructing a non-essentialist analysis, and the feeling that it is important to look at new jobs as well as at old) I am now involved in research on a 'new' region of economic growth – Cambridge. Cambridge: the very name of the place gives rise to thoughts of 'the Cambridge phenomenon' of high-technology growth, of science and innovation, and of white-collar work. It is all a million miles from coal mines, geographically, technologically, and – you would think – socially. In fact the picture is not as clear as that.

It is the highly qualified workers in high technology sectors on which this new research is concentrating. Well over 90 per cent of these scientists and technologists are men. They frequently love their work. This is no bad thing, until one comes across statements like 'the boundary between work and play disappears', which immediately gives pause for thought. Is the only thing outside paid employment 'play'? Who does the domestic labour? These employees work long hours on knotty problems, and construct their image of themselves as people around the paid work that they do. But those long hours, and the flexibility of their organization, is someone else's constraint. Who goes to the launderette? Who picks up the children from school? In a previous project, from which this one derived, and from which we have some initial information, only one of these employees, and that one of the few women whom we found, mentioned using the flexibility of work hours in any relation to domestic labour – in this case she said that on occasions she left work at six o'clock to nip home to feed the cat![1] The point is that the whole design of these jobs requires that such employees do not do the work of reproduction and of caring for other people; indeed it implies that, best of all, they have someone to look after *them*. It is not therefore just the old labour movement, it is also the regions of the 'new man' which have their problems in terms of the construction of gender relations. What is being constructed in this region of new economic growth is a new version of masculinity, and a new – and still highly problematical – set of gender roles and gender relations.[2]

London, published in 1992

Notes

1 See Doreen Massey, Paul Quintas and David Wield, *High-Tech Fantasies: Science Parks in Society, Science and Space*, London, Routledge, 1992.

2 This research is being undertaken with Nick Henry at the Open University and with funding from the Economic and Social Research Council (Grant no. R000233004, High status growth? Aspects of home and work around high technology sectors).

9

A Woman's Place?

The nineteenth century saw the expansion of capitalist relations of production in Britain. It was a geographically uneven and differentiated process, and the resulting economic differences between regions are well known: the rise of the coalfields, of the textile areas, the dramatic social and economic changes in the organization of agriculture, and so forth. Each was both a reflection of and a basis for the period of dominance which the UK economy enjoyed within the nineteenth-century international division of labour. In this wider spatial division of labour, in other words, different regions of Britain played different roles, and their economic and employment structures in consequence also developed along different paths.

But the spread of capitalist relations of production was also accompanied by other changes. In particular it disrupted the existing relations between women and men. The old patriarchal form of domestic production was torn apart, the established pattern of relations between the sexes was thrown into question. This, too, was a process which varied in its extent and in its nature between parts of the country, and one of the crucial influences on this variation was the nature of the emerging economic structures. In each of these different areas 'capitalism' and 'patriarchy' were articulated together, accommodated themselves to each other, in different ways.

It is this process that we wish to examine here. Schematically, what we are arguing is that the contrasting forms of economic development in different parts of the country presented distinct conditions for the maintenance of male dominance. *Extremely* schematically, capitalism presented

patriarchy with different challenges in different parts of the country. The question was in what ways the terms of male dominance would be reformulated within these changed conditions. Further, this process of accommodation between capitalism and patriarchy produced a different synthesis of the two in different places. It was a synthesis which was clearly visible in the nature of gender relations, and in the lives of women.

This issue of the synthesis of aspects of society within different places is what we examine in the following four subsections of this chapter. What we are interested in, in other words, is one complex in that whole constellation of factors which go to make up the uniqueness of place.

We have chosen four areas to look at. They are places where not only different 'industries' in the sectoral sense, but also different social forms of production, dominated: coal mining in the north-east of England, the factory work of the cotton towns, the sweated labour of inner London, and the agricultural gang-work of the Fens. In one paper we cannot do justice to the complexity of the syntheses which were established in these very different areas. All we attempt is to illustrate our argument by highlighting the most significant lines of contrast.

Since the construction of that nineteenth-century mosaic of differences all these regions have undergone further changes. In the second group of sections we leap ahead to the last decades of the twentieth century and ask, 'Where are they now?' What is clear is that, in spite of all the major national changes which might have been expected to iron out the contrasts, the areas, in terms of gender relations and the lives of women, are still distinct. But they are distinct in different ways now. Each is still unique, though each has changed. In this later section we focus on two threads in this reproduction and transformation of uniqueness. First, there have been different changes in the economic structure of the areas. They have been incorporated in different ways into the new, wider spatial division of labour, indeed the new international division of labour. The national processes of change in the UK economy, in other words, have not operated in the same way in each of the areas. The new layers of economic activity, or inactivity, which have been superimposed on the old are, just as was the old, different in different places. Second, however, the impact of the more recent changes has itself been moulded by the different existing conditions, the accumulated inheritance of the past, to produce distinct resulting combinations. 'The local' has had its impact on the operation of 'the national'.

The nineteenth century

Coal is our life: whose life?

Danger and drudgery; male solidarity and female oppression – this sums up a classic view of life in many colliery villages during much of the nineteenth century. Here the separation of men's and women's lives was virtually total: men were the breadwinners, women the domestic labourers, though hardly the 'angels of the house' that featured so large in the middle-class Victorian's idealization of women. The coal-mining areas of Durham provide a clear example of how changes in the economic organization of Victorian England interacted with a particular view of women's place to produce a rigidly hierarchial and patriarchal society. These villages were dominated by the pits and by the mine owners. Virtually all the men earned their livelihood in the mines and the mines were an almost exclusively male preserve, once women's labour was forbidden from the middle of the century. Men were the industrial proletariat selling their labour power to a monopoly employer, who also owned the home. Mining was a dirty, dangerous and hazardous job. Daily, men risked their lives in appalling conditions. The shared risks contributed to a particular form of male solidarity, and the endowment of their manual labour itself with the attributes of masculinity and virility. The shared dangers at work led to shared interests between men outside work: a shared pit language, shared clubs and pubs, a shared interest in sport. Women's banishment from the male world of work was thus compounded by their exclusion from the dominant forms of local political and social life.

Paid jobs for women in these areas were few. Domestic service for the younger girls; for married women poorly paid and haphazard work such as laundry, decorating or child-care. But most of the families were in the same position: there was little cash to spare for this type of service in families often depending on a single source of male wages. For miners' wives almost without exception, and for many of their daughters, unpaid work in the home was the only and time-consuming option. And here the unequal economic and social relationships between men and women imposed by the social organization of mining increased the subordinate position of women. A miner's work resulted in enormous domestic burdens for his wife and family. Underground work was filthy and this was long before the installation of pithead showers and protective clothing. Working clothes had to be boiled in coppers over the fire which had to heat all the hot water for washing clothes, people and floors. Shift-

work for the men increased women's domestic work: clothes had to be washed, backs scrubbed and hot meals prepared at all times of the day and night:

> 'I go to bed only on Saturday nights', said a miner's wife; 'my husband and our three sons are all in different shifts, and one or other of them is leaving or entering the house and requiring a meal every three hours of the twenty four.' (Webb, 1921, pp. 71–2)

An extreme example, perhaps, but not exceptional.

These miners, themselves oppressed at work, were often tyrants in their own home, dominating their wives in an often oppressive and bullying fashion. They seem to have 'reacted to [their own] exploitation by fighting not as a class against capitalism, but as a gender group against women – or rather within a framework of sex solidarity against a specific woman chosen and caged for this express purpose' (Frankenberg, 1976, p. 40). Men were the masters at home. Here is a Durham man, who himself went down the pits in the 1920s, describing his father:

> He was a selfish man. If there was three scones he'd want the biggest one. He'd sit at the table with his knife and fork on the table before the meal was even prepared . . . Nobody would get the newspaper till he had read it. (Strong Words Collective, 1977, pp. 11–12)

Thus gender relations took a particular form in these colliery villages. National ideologies and local conditions worked together to produce a unique set of patriarchal relations based on the extreme separation of men's and women's lives. Masculine supremacy and male predominance in many areas of economic and social life became an established, and almost unchallenged, fact. Patriarchal power in this part of the country remained hardly disturbed until the middle of the next century.

Cotton towns: the home turned upside down?

The images of homemaker and breadwinner are of course national ones, common to the whole of capitalist Britain, and not just to coalfield areas. But they were more extreme in these regions, and they took a particular form; there were differences between the coalfields and other parts of the country.

The cotton towns of the north-west of England are probably the best-known example from, as it were, the other end of the spectrum, and a major element in this has been the long history of paid labour outside the

home for women. It is often forgotten to what extent women were the first labour-force of factory-based, industrial capitalism. 'In this sense, modern industry was a direct challenge to the traditional sexual division of labour in social production' (Alexander, 1982, p. 41). And it was in the cotton industry around Manchester that the challenge was first laid down.

Maintaining patriarchal relations in such a situation was (and has been) a different and in many ways a more difficult job than in Durham. The challenge was none the less taken up. Indeed spinning, which had in the domestic organization of the textile industry been done by women, was taken over by men. Work on the mule came to be classified as 'heavy', as, consequently, to be done by men, and (also consequently) as skilled (Hall, 1982). The maintenance of male prerogative in the face of threats from women's employment, was conscious and was organized:

> The mule spinners did not leave their dominance to chance ... At their meeting in the Isle of Man in 1829 the spinners stipulated 'that no person be learned or allowed to spin except the son, brother, or orphan nephew of spinners'. Those women spinners who had managed to maintain their position were advised to form their own union. From then on the entry to the trade was very tightly controlled and the days of the female spinners were indeed numbered. (Hall, 1982, p. 22)

But if men won in spinning, they lost (in those terms) in weaving. The introduction of the power loom was crucial. With it, the factory system took over from the handloom weavers, and in the factories it was mainly women and children who were employed. This did present a real challenge:

> The men who had been at the heads of productive households were unemployed or deriving a pittance from their work whilst their wives and children were driven out to the factories. (Ibid., p. 24)

Nor was 'the problem' confined to weavers. For the fact that in some towns a significant number of married women went out to work weaving meant that further jobs were created for other women, doing for money aspects of domestic labour (washing and sewing, for example) that would otherwise have been done for nothing by the women weavers. Further, the shortage of employment for men, and low wages, provided another incentive for women to earn a wage for themselves (Anderson, 1971).

The situation caused moral outrage among the Victorian middle classes and presented serious competition to working-class men. There was

> what has been described as 'coincidence of interests' between philanthropists, the state – representing the collective interests of capital – and the male

> working class who were represented by the trade union movement and Chartism – which cooperated to reduce female and child labour and to limit the length of the working day. (Hall, 1982, p. 25)

In the same way, it was at national level that arguments about 'the family wage' came to be developed and refined as a further means of subordinating women's paid labour (for pin-money) to that of men's (to support a family). The transformation from domestic to factory production, a transformation which took place first in the cotton towns,

> provoked, as can be seen, a period of transition and re-accommodation in the sexual division of labour. The break-up of the family economy, with the threat this could present to the male head of household, who was already faced with a loss of control over his own labour, demanded a re-assertion of male authority. (Hall, 1982, p. 27)

Yet in spite of that reassertion, the distinctiveness of the cotton areas continued. There were more women in paid work, and particularly in relatively skilled paid work, in the textile industry and in this part of the country, than elsewhere:

> In many cases the family is not wholly dissolved by the employment of the wife, but turned upside down. The wife supports the family, the husband sits at home, tends the children, sweeps the room and cooks. This case happens very frequently: in Manchester alone, many hundred such men could be cited, condemned to domestic occupations. It is easy to imagine the wrath aroused among the working-men by this reversal of all relations within the family, while the other social conditions remain unchanged. (Engels, 1969 edn, p. 173)

This tradition of waged labour for Lancashire women, more developed than in other parts of the country, has lasted. Of the early twentieth century, Liddington writes, 'Why did so many Lancashire women go out to work? By the turn of the century economic factors had become further reinforced by three generations of social conventions. It became almost unthinkable for women *not* to work' (1979, pp. 98–9).

And this tradition in its turn had wider effects. Lancashire women joined trade unions on a scale unknown elsewhere in the country: 'union membership was accepted as part of normal female behaviour in the cotton towns' (Liddington, 1979, p. 99). In the nineteenth century the independent mill-girls were renowned for their cheekiness; of the women of the turn-of-the-century cotton towns, Liddington writes: 'Lancashire women, trade unionists on a massive scale unmatched elsewhere, were

organized, independent and proud' (1979, p. 99). And it was from this base of organized working women that arose the local suffrage campaign of the early twentieth century: 'Lancashire must occupy a special place in the minds of feminist historians. The radical suffragists sprang from an industrial culture which enabled them to organize a widespread political campaign for working women like themselves' (ibid., p. 98).

The radical suffragists mixed working-class and feminist politics in a way which challenged both middle-class suffragettes and working-class men. In the end, though, it was precisely their uniqueness which left them isolated – their uniqueness as radical trade unionists *and* women, and, ironically, their highly regionalized base:

> The radical suffragists failed in the end to achieve the political impact they sought. The reforms for which they campaigned – of which the most important was the parliamentary vote – demanded the backing of the national legislature at Westminster. Thousands of working women in the Lancashire cotton towns supported their campaign, and cotton workers represented five out of six of all women trade union members. No other group of women workers could match their level of organization, their (relatively) high wages and the confidence they had in their own status as skilled workers. Their strength, however, was regional rather than national, and when they tried to apply their tactics to working-class women elsewhere or to the national political arena, they met with little success. Ultimately the radical suffragists' localised strength proved to be a long-term weakness. (Liddington, 1979, p. 110)

The rag-trade in Hackney: a suitable job for a woman?

But there were other industries in other parts of the country where women were equally involved in paid labour, where conditions were as bad as in the cotton mills, yet where at this period not a murmur was raised against their employment. One such area was Hackney, dominated by industries where sweated labour was the main form of labour organization.

What was different about this form of wage relation for women from men's point of view? What was so threatening about women working? Hall (1982) enumerates a number of threads to the threat. The first was that labour was now *waged* labour. Women with a wage of their own had a degree of potentially unsettling financial independence. But Lancashire textiles and the London sweated trades had this in common. The thing that distinguished them was the spatial separation of home and workplace. The dominant form of organization of the labour process in the London

sweated trades was homeworking. The waged labour was carried out in the home: in Lancashire, birthplace of the factory system, waged labour by now meant leaving the house and going to the mill. It wasn't so much 'work' as 'going out to' work which was the threat to the patriarchal order. And this in two ways: it threatened the ability of women adequately to perform their domestic role as homemaker for men and children, and it gave them an entry into public life, mixed company, a life not defined by family and husband.

It was, then, a change in the social *and the spatial* organization of work which was crucial. And that change mattered to women as well as men. Lancashire women did get out of the home. The effects of homeworking *are* different: the worker remains confined to the privatized space of the home, and individualized, isolated from other workers. Unionization of women in cotton textiles has always been far higher than amongst the homeworking women in London.

Nor was this all. For the *nature* of the job also mattered in terms of its potential impact on gender relations:

> Only those sorts of work that coincided with a woman's natural sphere were to be encouraged. Such discrimination had little to do with the danger or unpleasantness of the work concerned. There was not much to choose for example – if our criterion is risk to life or health – between work in the mines, and work in the London dressmaking trades. But no one suggested that sweated needlework should be prohibited to women. (Alexander, 1982, p. 33)

Thinking back to the contrast between the coalfields and the cotton towns and the relationship in each between economic structure and gender relations and roles, it is clear that the difference between the two areas was not simply based on the presence/absence of waged labour. We have, indeed, already suggested other elements, such as the whole ideology of virility attached to mining. But it was also to do with the *kind* of work for women in Lancashire: that it was factory work, with machines, and outside the home. In the sweated trades of nineteenth-century London, capitalism and patriarchy together produced less immediate threat to men's domination.

There were other ways, too, in which capitalism and patriarchy interrelated in the inner London of that time to produce a specific outcome. The sweated trades in which the women worked, and in particular clothing, were located in the inner areas of the metropolis for a whole variety of reasons, among them the classic one of quick access to fast-changing markets. But they also needed labour, and they needed cheap labour.

Homeworking, besides being less of an affront to patriarchal relations, was one means by which costs were kept down. But costs (wages) were also kept down by the very availability of labour. In part this was a result of immigration and the vulnerable position of immigrants in the labour market. But it was also related to the predominantly low-paid and irregular nature of jobs for men (Harrison, 1983, p. 42). Women in Hackney *needed* to work for a wage. And this particular Hackney articulation of patriarchal influences and other 'location factors' worked well enough for the clothing industry.

But even given that in Hackney the social organization and nature of women's work was less threatening to men than in the cotton towns, there were still defensive battles to be fought. The labour-force of newly arrived immigrants also included men. Clearly, were the two sexes to do the same jobs, or be accorded the same status, or the same pay, this would be disruptive of male dominance. The story of the emergence of a sexual division of labour within the clothing industry was intimately bound up with the maintenance of dominance by males in the immigrant community. They did not use the confused and contradictory criteria of 'skill' and 'heavy work' employed so successfully in Lancashire. In clothing *any* differentiation would do. Phillips and Taylor (1980) have told the story of the establishment of the sexual division of labour in production, based on the minutest of differences of job, changes in those differences over time, and the use of them in whatever form they took to establish the men's job as skilled and the women's as less so.

Rural life and labour

Our final example is drawn from the Fenlands of East Anglia, where the division of labour and gender relations took a different form again. In the rural villages and hamlets of nineteenth-century East Anglia, as in the Lancashire cotton towns, many women 'went out to work'. But here there was no coal industry, no factory production of textiles, no sweated labour in the rag trade. Economic life was overwhelmingly dominated by agriculture. And in this part of the country farms were large, and the bulk of the population was landless, an agricultural proletariat. The black soils demanded lots of labour in dyking, ditching, claying, stone-picking and weeding to bring them under the 'New Husbandry', the nineteenth-century extension of arable land (Samuel, 1975, pp. 12 and 18). Women were an integral part of this agricultural workforce, doing heavy work of all sorts on the land, and provoking much the same moral outrage as did the employment

of women in mills in Lancashire:

> ... the poor wage which most labourers could earn forced their wives to sell their labour too, and continue working in the fields. In Victorian eyes, this was anathema for it gave women an independence and freedom unbecoming to their sex. 'That which seems most to lower the moral or decent tone of the peasant girls', wrote Dr. Henry Hunter in his report to the Privy Council in 1864, 'is the sensation of independence of society which they acquire when they have remunerative labour in their hands, either in the fields or at home as straw-plaiters etc. All gregarious employment gives a slang character to the girls appearance and habits, while dependence on the man for support is the spring of modest and pleasing deportment'. The first report of the Commissioners on The Employment of Children, Young Persons and Women in Agriculture in 1867, put it more strongly, for not only did landwork 'almost unsex a woman', but it 'generates a further very pregnant social mischief by unfitting or indisposing her for a woman's proper duties at home'. (Chamberlain, 1975, p. 17)

The social and spatial structure of the rural communities of this area also influenced the availability and the nature of work. Apart from work on the land, there were few opportunities for women to earn a wage. Even if they did not leave the village permanently, it was often necessary to travel long distances, frequently in groups, with even more serious repercussions in the eyes of the Victorian establishment:

> The worst form of girl labour, from the point of view of bourgeois respectability, was the 'gang' system, which provoked a special commission of inquiry, and a great deal of outraged commentary, in the 1860s. It was most firmly established in the Fen districts of East Anglia and in the East Midlands. The farms in these parts tended to be large but the labouring population was scattered ... The labour to work the land then had to be brought from afar, often in the form of travelling gangs, who went from farm to farm to perform specific tasks. (Kitteringham, 1975, p. 98)

There are here some familiar echoes from Lancashire. And yet things were different in the Fens. In spite of all the potential threats to morality, domesticity, femininity and general female subordination, 'going out to work' on the land for women in the Fens, even going off in gangs for spells away from the village, does not seem to have resulted in the kinds of social changes, and the real disruption to established ways, that occurred in Lancashire. In this area, women's waged labour did not seem to present a threat to male supremacy within the home. Part of the explanation lies in the different nature of the work for women. This farm labour was often seasonal. The social and spatial organization of farmwork was quite

different from that of factory work, and always insecure. Each gang negotiated wage rates independently with the large landowners, the women were not unionized, did not work in factories, were not an industrial proletariat in the same sense as the female mill workers in the cotton towns. Part of the explanation too, as in the colliery villages, lies in the organization of male work. Men, too, were predominantly agricultural labourers, though employed on an annual rather than a seasonal basis, and like mining, agricultural work was heavy and dirty, imposing a similar domestic burden on rural women.

A further influence was the life of the rural village, which was overwhelmingly conservative – socially, sexually and politically. Women on the land in this area did not become radicalized like women in the cotton towns. Relations between the sexes continued unchanged. Women served their menfolk, and both men and women served the local landowner; nobody rocked the boat politically:

> When the Coatesworths ruled the village to vote Tory was to get and keep a job. The Liberals were the party of the unemployed and the undeserving ... Concern over politics was not confined to men. The women took an interest, too. They had to. Their man's political choice crucially affected his employment, and their lives. (Chamberlain, 1975, p. 130)

Where are they now?

What is life like in these areas now? Have the traditional attitudes about women's place in the home in the heavy industrial areas survived post-war changes? Have Lancashire women managed to retain the independence that so worried the Victorian middle class? In this century there have been enormous changes in many areas of economic and social life. The communications revolution has linked all parts of the country together. TV, radio, video and a national press have reduced regional isolation and increased the ease with which new ideas and attitudes spread. Changes in social mores, in the role of the family, in the labour process of domestic work, increased divorce rates and a rapid rise in women's participation in waged labour between the Second World War and the end of the seventies have all had an impact. And yet, we shall argue here, regional differences remain.

There are, as we said in the introduction, two threads which we shall follow in this process of the reproduction of local uniqueness. The first concerns the geographically differentiated operation of national processes. Over 40 per cent of the national paid labour-force in the UK now

consists of women: a vast majority of them married. One of the consequences of this growth of jobs 'for women' has paradoxically been both an increase and a reduction in regional differences. The gender division of labour is changing in different ways in different areas, in part in response to previous patterns. Regional disparities in the proportion of women at work are closing, but the corollary of this, of course, is that the highest proportions of new and expanding jobs are in those very regions where previously few women have been involved in waged labour. The four regions are being drawn in different ways into a new national structure of employment and unemployment. We cannot here attempt to explain this new spatial pattern. One thing we do hint at, though, is that the form of gender relations themselves, and the previous economic and social history of women in each of these places, may be one, though only one, thread in that explanation.

The areas, then, have experienced different types of change in their economic structure. In many ways the growth of jobs for women has been of greater significance in the north-east and in East Anglia than in the cotton towns or in Hackney. But that is not the end of the story. For those changes have themselves been combined with existing local conditions and this has influenced their operation and their effect. The impact of an increase in jobs for women has not been the same in the Fens as it has been in the coalfields of the north-east. This, then, is the second thread in our discussion of the reproduction of local uniqueness.

In the rest of this paper we try to show the links between past and present patterns, how changing attitudes to women's and men's roles at work and in the family in different parts of the country (themselves related to previous economic roles) both influence and are influenced by national changes in the nature and organization of paid employment over time. The present gender division of labour in particular places is the outcome of the combination over time of successive phases. Space and location still matter. The structure of relationships between men and women varies between, and within, regions. Life in inner London is still not the same as in the Fenlands, in the coalfields of the north-east, as in the textile towns round Manchester. The current division of labour between women and men is different, paid employment is differently structured and organized, and even its spatial form varies between one part of the country and another.

Coal was our life?

The decline of work in the pits is a well-known aspect of post-war economic changes in Britain. How have the men and women of the north-

east reacted to this decline in their traditional livelihood? Have the changes challenged or strengthened the traditional machismo of the north-eastern male? What is happening in the north-east today in many ways recalls some of the images – and the social alarm – generated by the cotton towns a hundred years earlier. It is now in the north-east that homes are being 'turned upside down' and patriarchy threatened by women going out to work. At the beginning of the 1960s, still something less than a quarter of all adult women in the old colliery areas worked outside their homes for wages. The figure has more than doubled since then. And part of the explanation lies in the local distinctiveness, the uniqueness of these areas that has its origins in the nineteenth century. The women of this area have no tradition of waged labour, no union experience. It was, of course, these very features that proved attractive to the female-employing industries that opened branch plants in increasing numbers in Co. Durham in the sixties and seventies.

The new jobs that came to the north-east, then, were mainly for women. They were located on trading estates and in the region's two New Towns built to attract industrial investment and also to improve housing conditions. The women who moved into the New Towns of Peterlee and Washington provided a cheap, flexible, untrained and trapped pool of labour for incoming firms. And added to this, the loss of jobs for men together with the rent rises entailed by a move to new housing pushed women into the labour market.

Male antagonism to the new gender division of labour was almost universal. Outrage at women 'taking men's jobs', pleas for 'proper jobs', an assumption that the packing, processing and assembly-line work that loomed ever larger in the economic structure of the area was an affront to masculine dignity: 'I think a lot of men feel that assembly work wouldn't be acceptable; they'd be a bit proud about doing that type of work in this area. North East ideas are ingrained in the men in this area' (Lewis, 1983, p. 19). These assumptions appear to be shared by the new employers: 'we are predominantly female labour orientated ... the work is more suited to women, it's very boring, I suppose we're old-fashioned and still consider it as women's work ... the men aren't interested'.

This lack of interest plays right into the hands of the employers: once defined as 'women's work', the jobs are then classified as semi- or unskilled and hence low paid. An advantage that can be further exploited, as this factory director explains:

> 'we changed from full-time to part-time women(!) ... especially on the packing ... because two part-timers are cheaper than one full-timer ... we don't have to pay national insurance if they earn less than £27.00 a week,

> and the women don't have to pay the stamp ... the hours we offer suit their social lives'. (Lewis, 1984)

So if men aren't doing jobs outside the house, what are they doing instead? Are men here, like their Lancashire forebears 'condemned to domestic occupations'? Unlikely. An ex-miner's wife speaking on *Woman's Hour* in 1983 recalled that her husband would only reluctantly help in the home, pegging out the washing, for example, under cover of darkness!

Things *are* changing, though. Men are seen pushing prams in Peterlee, Newcastle-upon-Tyne Council has a women's committee, TV crews come to inquire into the progress of the domestication of the unemployed north-eastern male and the social and psychological problems it is presumed to bring with it. Working-class culture is still dominated by the club and the pub but even their male exclusivity is now threatened. The 1984 miners' strike seems set to transform gender relations even further. New battle-lines between the sexes are being drawn. The old traditional pattern of relations between the sexes, which was an important condition for the new gender division being forged in the labour market, is now under attack.

Industry in the country?

How has life changed in the Fens? In some ways, continuity rather than change is the link between the past and present here. For many women, especially the older ones, work on the land is still their main source of employment:

> hard work, in uncompromising weather, in rough old working clothes padded out with newspaper against the wind ... Marriage for convenience or marriage to conform ... Land-worker, home servicer. Poverty and exploitation – of men and women by the landowners, of women by their men. (Chamberlain, 1975, p. 11)

Not much different from their grandmothers and great-grandmothers before them. Gangs are still a common feature and the nature of fieldwork has hardly changed either. Flowers are weeded and picked by hand. Celery and beet are sown and picked manually too. And this type of work is considered 'women's work'. It is poorly paid, seasonal and backbreaking. Male fieldworkers, on the other hand, have the status of 'labourers', relative permanence and the benefits associated with full-time employment. And they are the ones who have machinery to assist them.

Life *has* changed though. Small towns and rural areas such as the Fens have been favoured locations for the new branch plants and decentralizing

industries of the sixties and seventies. Labour is cheap here – particularly with so few alternatives available – and relatively unorganized. Especially for younger women, the influx of new jobs has opened up the range of employment opportunities. It provides a means, still, both of supplementing low male wages, and of meeting people – of getting out of the small world of the village.

The impact of such jobs on women's lives, though, even the possibility of taking them, has been structured by local conditions, including gender relations. This is still a very rural area. The new jobs are in the nearby town. So unless factories provide their own transport (which a number do), access is a major problem. Public transport is extremely limited, and becoming more so. There are buses – but only once a week to most places. Not all families have a car, and very few women have daily use of one, let alone own 'their own' car. For many women, a bicycle is the only means of getting about.

This in turn has wider effects. For those who do make the journey to a factory job the effective working day (including travel time) can be very long. The time for domestic labour is squeezed, the work process consequently intensified. Those who remain in the village become increasingly isolated. The industrial workers, be they husbands or women friends, are absent for long hours, and services – shops, doctors, libraries – gradually have been withdrawn from villages.

It seems that the expansion of industrial jobs 'for women' has had relatively little impact on social relations in the rural Fens. In part, this is to do with the local conditions into which the jobs were introduced: the impact back of local factors on national changes. The Fenland villages today are still Conservative – politically and socially. Divorce, left-wing politics, women's independence are very much the exception.

Old cultural forms, transmitted, have remained remarkably intact:

> Although love potions and true-lovers' knots made of straw have disappeared, Lent and May weddings are still considered unlucky. The Churching of Women – an ancient post-natal cleansing ceremony – is still carried on, and pre-marital intercourse and the resulting pregnancy is as much a hangover from an older utilitarian approach to marriage as a result of the permissive society. In a farming community sons are important and there would be little point in marrying an infertile woman. (Chamberlain, 1975, p. 71)

Attitudes to domestic responsibilities also remain traditional:

> No women go out to work while the children are small – tho' there isn't much work anyway, and no facilities for childcare. Few women allow their

> children to play in the streets, or let them be seen in less than immaculate dress. Many men come home to lunch and expect a hot meal waiting for them. (Ibid., p. 71)

It takes more than the availability of a few jobs, it seems, substantially to alter the pattern of life for women in this area:

> Although employment is no longer dependent on a correct political line, the village is still rigidly hierarchic in its attitudes, and follows the pattern of the constituency in voting solidly Conservative. And in a rigidly hierarchical society, when the masters are also the men, most women see little point in taking an interest in politics, or voting against the established order of their homes or the community as a whole . . . Most women must of necessity stick to the life they know. Their husbands are still the all-provider. The masters of their lives. (Ibid., pp. 130–1)

Gender relations in East Anglia apparently have hardly been affected by the new jobs, let alone 'turned upside down'.

A regional problem for women?

The contrast with the cotton towns of Lancashire is striking. Here, where employment for women in the major industry had been declining for decades, was a major source of female labour, already skilled, already accustomed to factory work, plainly as 'dexterous' as elsewhere. And yet the new industries of the sixties and seventies, seeking out female labour, did not come here, or not to the extent that they went to other places.

The reasons are complex, but they are bound up once again with the intricate relationship between capitalist and patriarchal structures. For one thing, here there was no regional policy assistance. There has, for much of this century, been massive decline in employment in the cotton industry in Lancashire. Declines comparable to those in coal mining, for instance, and in areas dominated by it. Yet the cotton towns were never awarded Development Area status. To the extent that Assisted Areas were designated on the basis of unemployment rates, the explanation lies at the level of taxes and benefits which define women as dependent. There is often less point in signing on. A loss of jobs does not necessarily show up, therefore, in a corresponding increase in regional unemployment. Development Areas, however, were *not* designated simply on the basis of unemployment rates. They were wider concepts, and wider regions, designated on the basis of a more general economic decline and need for regeneration. To that extent the non-designation of the cotton towns was due in part to a more general political blindness to questions of women's employment.

So the lack of regional policy incentives must have been, relatively, a deterrent to those industries scanning the country for new locations. But it cannot have been the whole explanation. New industries moved to other non-assisted areas – East Anglia, for instance. Many factors were in play, but one of them surely was that the women of the cotton towns were not, either individually or collectively in their history, 'green labour'. The long tradition of women working in factory jobs, and their relative financial independence, has continued. In spite of the decline of cotton textiles the region still has a high female activity rate. And with this there continued, in modified form, some of those other characteristics. Kate Purcell, doing research in the Stockport of the 1970s, found that:

> It is clear that traditions of female employment and current rates of economic activity affect not only women's activity per se, but also their attitudes to, and experience of, employment. The married women I interviewed in Stockport, where female activity rates are 45 per cent and have always been high, define their work as normal and necessary, whereas those women interviewed in the course of a similar exercise in Hull, where the widespread employment of married women is more recent and male unemployment rates are higher, frequently made references to the fortuitous nature of their work. (Purcell, 1979, p. 119)

As has so often been noted in the case of male workers, confidence and independence are not attributes likely to attract new investment. It may well be that here there is a case where the same reasoning has applied to women.

But whatever the precise structure of explanation, the women of the cotton towns are now facing very different changes from those being faced by the women of the coalfields. Here they are not gaining a new independence from men; to some extent in places it may even be decreasing. Women's unemployment is not seen to 'disrupt' family life, or cause TV programmes to be made about challenges to gender relations, for women do the domestic work anyway. Having lost one of their jobs, they carry on (unpaid) with the other.

Hackney: still putting out

What has happened in Hackney is an intensification of the old patterns of exploitation and subordination rather than the superimposition of new patterns. Here manufacturing jobs have declined, but the rag trade remains a major employer. The women of Hackney possess, apparently, some of the same advantages to capital as do those of the coalfields and

the Fens: they are cheap and unorganized – less than 10 per cent are in a union (Harrison, 1983, pp. 69–70). In inner London, moreover, the spatial organization of the labour-force, the lack of separation of home and work, strengthens the advantages: overheads (light, heat, maintenance of machinery) are borne by the workers themselves; workers are not eligible for social security benefits; their spatial separation one from another makes it virtually impossible for them to combine to force up wage rates, and so on.

So given the clear advantages to capital of such a vulnerable potential workforce, why has there been no influx of branch plants of multinationals, of electronics assembly lines and suchlike? Recent decades have of course seen the growth of new types of jobs for women, particularly in the service sector, if not within Hackney itself then within travelling distance (for some), in the centre of London. But, at the moment, for big manufacturing capital and for the clerical mass-production operations which in the sixties and seventies established themselves in the Development Areas and more rural regions of the country, this vulnerable labour of the capital city holds out few advantages. Even the larger clothing firms (with longer production runs, a factory labour process, locational flexibility and the capital to establish new plant) have set up their new branch plants elsewhere, either in the peripheral regions of Britain or in the Third World. So why not in Hackney? In part the women of Hackney have been left behind in the wake of the more general decentralization, the desertion by manufacturing industry of the conurbations of the First World. In part they are the victims of the changing international division of labour within the clothing industry itself. But in part, too, the reasons lie in the nature of the available labour. Homeworking does have advantages for capital, but this way of making female labour cheap is no use for electronics assembly lines or for other kinds of less individualized production. The usefulness of this way of making labour vulnerable is confined to certain types of labour process.

The influx of service jobs in central London has outbid manufacturing for female labour, in terms both of wages and of conditions of work (see Massey, 1984, ch. 4). But working in service jobs has not been an option available to all. For women in one way or another tied to the home, or to the very local area, homeworking in industries such as clothing has become increasingly the only available option. Given the sexual division of labour in the home, homeworking benefits some women:

> Homework when properly paid, suits many women: women who wish to stay at home with small children, women who dislike the discipline and timekeeping of factory work and wish to work at their own pace. Muslim women observing semi-purdah. (Harrison, 1983, p. 64)

But homework seldom is 'properly paid'. Harrison again, on types of work and rates of pay in Hackney in 1982:

> There are many other types of homework in Hackney: making handbags, stringing buttons on cards, wrapping greeting cards, filling Christmas crackers, assembling plugs and ballpens, sticking insoles in shoes, threading necklaces. Rates of pay vary enormously according to the type of work and the speed of the worker, but it is rare to find any that better the average female hourly earnings in the clothing trade in 1981, £1.75 an hour, itself the lowest for any branch of industry. And many work out worse than the Wages Council minimum for the clothing trade of £1.42 per hour (in 1982). Given these rates of pay, sometimes the whole family, kids and all, are dragooned in ... one mother had her three daughters and son helping to stick eyes and tails on cuddly toys. (Ibid., pp. 67–8)

The involvement of all members of a family in homework or working as a team in small family-owned factories is not uncommon, especially among certain ethnic minorities. For small companies the extended family may be essential to survival:

> the flexibility comes from the family: none of their wages are fixed. When times are good, they may be paid more. When they are bad, they are paid less. They get the same pay whether their hours are short or long.

The fact that women are employed in the context of an extended family is important not only in the organization of the industry but also for the lives of the women themselves. They may have a wage, but they do not get the other forms of independence which can come with a job. They do not get out of the sphere of the family, they do not make independent circles of friends and contacts, nor establish a spatially separate sphere of existence. Within the family itself the double subordination of women is fixed through the mixing in one person of the role of husband or father with that of boss and employer.

But it is not that there have been no changes in recent decades for the homeworkers of Hackney. They too have been caught up in and affected by the recent changes in the international division of labour. The clothing industry of London in the second half of the twentieth century finds itself caught between cheap imports on the one hand and competition for labour from the better working conditions of the service sector on the other. The clothing firms with the ability to do so have long since left. For those that remain, cutting labour costs is a priority, and homeworking a means to do it. So an increasing proportion of the industry's work in the metropolis is now done on this social system while the amount of work overall, and the real wages paid, decline dramatically. For the women who work in this industry there is thus more competition for available work, increasing vulnerability to employers and intensification of the labour

process. And this change in employment conditions brings increased pressures on home life too, though very different ones from those in the north-east, or the Fens. For these women in Hackney their workplace is also their home.

Here's Mary, a forty-five-year-old English woman with teenage children describing the pressures she feels:

> I've been machining since I was fifteen, and with thirty years' experience I'm really fast now ... But I'm having to work twice as hard to earn the money. The governors used to go on their knees to get you to take work if they had a rush to meet a delivery date. But they're not begging no more. It's take it or leave it. If you argue about the price they say we can always find others to do it. It's like one big blackmail. Three years ago we used to get 35p to 40p for a blouse, but now [1982] you only get 15p to 20p ...
>
> I used to get my work done in five hours, now I work ten or twelve hours a day ... The kids say, mum, I don't know why you sit there all those hours. I tell them, I don't do it for love, I've got to feed and clothe us. I won't work Sundays though. I have to think about the noise ... I'm cooped up in a cupboard all day – I keep my machine in the storage cupboard, it's about three feet square with no windows. I get pains in my shoulders where the tension builds up. I've got one lot of skirts to do now, I've got to do sixteen in an hour to earn £1.75 an hour, that means I can't let up for half a second between each skirt. I can't afford the time to make a cup of tea. With that much pressure, at the end of the day you're at screaming pitch. If I wasn't on tranquillizers, I couldn't cope. I'm not good company, I lose my temper easily. Once I might have been able to tolerate my kids' adolescence, with this I haven't been able to, I haven't been able to help them – I need someone to help me at the end of the day. (Harrison, 1983, pp. 65–7)

Reflected in this woman's personal experience, her sweated labour and family tensions, is a new spatial division of labour at an international scale. Low-wage, non-unionized workers in Hackney are competing directly with the same type of low-technology, labour-intensive industries in the Third World. But it is precisely the history of the rag trade in Hackney, the previous layers of economic and social life, that have forced this competition on them. The intersection of national and international trends, of family and economic relationships, of patriarchy and capitalism have produced this particular set of relationships in one area of inner London.

Milton Keynes
published in 1984

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10

Flexible Sexism

Introduction

In the current debate around modernism and postmodernism, which is having its reflection in our field, both sides claim feminism for their own. Moreover, to feminists each offers possibilities. Postmodernism holds out the potential democracy of a plurality of voices and points of view, the end to a notion of science and society which has in fact (to be distinguished from 'by necessity') been unremittingly and tediously male, a patriarchal hierarchy with a claim to truth. Modernism, on the other hand, points to the possibility of progress and change. Things may be patriarchal now (including, OK let's admit it, modernism itself) but they need not always be so; more than that, it is possible to judge between alternatives, and history is on our side.

However, that it may be difficult to choose between the attractions they each at least in their rhetorics appear to offer, has as its other side that both postmodernism and modernism remain so frequently, so unimaginatively, patriarchal. This has been said before about the wider debate (for instance, see Fraser and Nicholson, 1988). If there is one thing which has most certainly demonstrated its flexibility in an age which as a whole is frequently accorded that epithet, it is sexism.

This feature is also disappointingly characteristic of the way in which at least some of the modernism – postmodernism debate has been conducted in our field, and it is the purpose of this paper to examine some of the ways in which this happens and to explore some of its implications. To this end I am focusing on two books which have been published

recently: Soja's *Postmodern Geographies* (1989) and Harvey's *The Condition of Postmodernity* (1989). These books have been chosen not because they are in any sense representative of the debate between postmodernism and modernism (indeed there is argument about even how they might be classified) but because they are, or may become, central to the discussion within geography. Nor is this paper meant to be a full review of either book; it simply reports on the thoughts which they aroused in me around one specific issue: feminism. For it seems to me that the absence from, indeed denial by, both these books of feminism and the contributions it has recently made, raise issues which are important for all of us, and which range from our style as academics to the way in which some of the central concepts of the debate are formulated. Indeed, the implications are perhaps in the end even wider than that. For both these books are centrally concerned with the relation between the poles of that impossible dichotomy: space and society. And, as the debate about this relation is crucial in the whole modernism–postmodernism exchange, it seems important to address its shortcomings. As we shall see, introducing feminism into this exchange challenges the views, not just of society but also of space, which these books develop.

I should also like to report that I had some hesitation about writing this paper. I do not like public mud-slinging and have tried not to indulge in it here, but the paper is at times very critical. Nor do I relish gladiatorial combats and I hope that the result of this paper will be more to open (or continue) a wider debate. For it is certainly not just with these two particular authors that I want to take issue. Similar critiques could be made of much of our work, probably including some of my own and other feminists'. These particular books, however, claim a generality and a breadth of scope which others do not, and it is for this reason that they are particularly important to examine. The questions, though, are ones which we should all address. Moreover, these books are also significant because, I am sure, neither of the authors would want to be thought of as anti-feminist. Yet, I want to argue, both books are in fact quite fundamentally so. And if they are so, as it were, in spite of their authors' best intentions it becomes even more important to think through how that comes about. For it should be stressed that what is being argued here is not that women, or even gender, should have been mentioned more often; but that the incredible lack of attention both to feminism and to what feminists have been arguing now for a considerable number of years in the end vitiates both of the wider, and very different, projects which these two books set out to accomplish.

Postmodern problems for feminists

Democracy and academic style

One of the main attractions of the postmodern perspective is that it would seem on initial viewing to offer the prospect of a greater democracy through its recognition of the reality of a variety of viewpoints, a plurality of cultures. This has its underside: those viewpoints and cultures may, for example, run counter to what we have been accustomed, from a modernist perspective, to think of as progressive, and postmodernism forbids us from evaluating. Moreover, as Harvey argues very well, mere recognition of the existence of something does not empower it.

None the less, one of the promises of postmodernism is that it will allow fuller appreciation of those who have for so long been banished to the margins, whether these be non-western societies, women/feminists, or subordinated class strata.

In such a context one of the emancipatory roles of the writer and intellectual could be precisely to help give voice to the previously excluded. This is not itself an unproblematical possibility, as the intricate debates in other disciplines, most particularly anthropology, bear witness (for reviews and debate see, for instance, Clifford and Marcus, 1986; Mascia-Lees et al., 1989). It is a debate which could profitably be further developed within geography. None the less, postmodernism can to some extent be seen as holding out some such progressive possibilities. And to some extent they have been taken up.

There is, however, another view of the role of intellectuals (particularly the paid professional intellectuals of academe) within the postmodernist project/era. And it is this one which I wish to take up here, for it raises important issues about who and how we are as 'academics'. Thus, Bauman (1988) has interpreted the concept of postmodernism as a response by intellectuals to their own discomfiture, their sense of dislodgement from previous authority. (The deliberate ambiguity of 'project/era' was thus apt in the context of this discussion.) Bauman's argument is that the concept of postmodernity has value precisely because it captures and articulates the changing experience of contemporary intellectuals. Intellectuals have become more self-aware – 'In the discourse of "postmodernity" ... The participants ... appear in the role of "organic intellectuals" of the intellectuals themselves' (p. 218), and this turning around of Gramsci's original definition is, so Bauman argues, a response to a growing sense of failure, uselessness and irrelevance. He goes on to develop an analysis of the reasons behind this 'status crisis' of the intellectuals and isolates three determinants as crucial: the end of the assumption of the superiority of

the West over the rest ('now at best ridiculed as naivety, at worst castigated as ethnocentric' [p. 220]), the decline of the state's need for legitimation (which 'has been replaced with two mutually complementary weapons: this of *seduction* and that of *repression*' [p. 221]), and the decline of the judgmental hegemony of intellectuals over the expanding sphere of, especially popular, culture ('what hurts ... is not so much an expropriation, but the fact that the intellectuals are not invited to stand at the helm of this breath-taking expansion' [p. 224]).

This view has been developed further by other authors. Owens (1985) emphasizes not just the often-referred-to demise of the dominance of western culture but also the challenge to modernity from within the geographical bases of that culture: 'the causes of modernity's demise ... lie as much within as without' (p. 58). And among the many different challenges to modernity from within has been the challenge from feminism. Bondi (1990) argues that postmodernism 'may be understood as a crisis in the experience of modernity among white, western men, and as a response centred on that experience' (p. 5). Moreover, it is argued, the nature of the response to the crisis is such as to find, somehow, a way of hanging on to intellectual hegemony, or at least of not letting anyone else have it. Thus Hartsock (1987, p. 196) argues:

> Somehow it seems highly suspicious that it is at this moment in history, when so many groups are engaged in 'nationalisms' which involve redefinitions of the marginalised Others, that doubt arises in the academy about the nature of the 'subject', about the possibilities for a general theory which can describe the world, about historical 'progress'. Why is it, exactly at the moment when so many of us who have been silenced begin to demand the right to name ourselves, to act as subjects rather than objects of history, that just then the concept of subjecthood becomes 'problematic'? Just when we are forming our own theories about the world, uncertainty emerges about whether the world can be adequately theorised? Just when we are talking about the changes we want, ideas of progress and the possibility of 'meaningfully' organizing human society become suspect?

Similarly, Mascia-Lees et al., drawing on Lennox (1987), comment: 'When Western white males – who traditionally have controlled the production of knowledge – can no longer define the truth ... their response is to conclude that there is not a truth to be discovered' (1989, p. 15).

There are a number of issues here. First, if there is anything at all in these interpretations (and I think there is, though it is by no means a whole explanation), then it is inadequate to try to explain the condition of postmodernity and the associated debates about representation simply as the result of 'time–space compression', as Harvey does. The arguments

just cited give more autonomy than does Harvey, not only to the sphere of culture and intellectual debate, but also – and more significantly from the point of view of the discussion here – to the sphere of political action. What is more, as Hartsock argues, political action and intellectual activity have been much more closely linked together in fields such as feminist studies, ethnic studies and Third World studies than they have been in more mainstream white male modernism (including much Marxism) for all its claims to political relevance.[1]

But second, if this is a crisis in part within the groves of academe itself then, it has been argued, it is frequently conducted more with an eye to positions of power and influence within the academy than with any liberating project of the full recognition of others. This point has been made most sharply by Sangren. Writing of ethnography, he says,

> whatever 'authority' is created in a text has its most direct social effect not in the world of political and economic domination of the Third World by colonial and neocolonial powers, but rather in the academic institutions in which such authors participate. (1988, p. 411)

And Mascia-Lees et al. add:

> While postmodernist anthropologists such as Clifford, Marcus, and Fisher may choose to think that they are transforming global power relations as well as the discipline of anthropology itself, they may also be establishing first claim in the new academic territory on which this decade's battles for intellectual supremacy and jobs will be waged. (1989, p. 16)

Third, it is necessary in other words to recognize the power relations within academe and within intellectual debate. Thus, Rorty (1979) proposes that philosophy and intellectual activity should be persistently oppositional and that cultural exchange, indeed culture in general, should be conceptualized as a conversation, and a conversation in which the previously marginalized are invited to participate. But as Hartsock acerbically points out:

> From having been constructed as void and lack, and from having been forbidden to speak, we are now expected to join in equal conversation with someone who has just realised that philosophy has been overconfident. (1987, p. 200)

These arguments raise serious issues for all intellectuals/academics about their behaviour within their own social group, about the nature of their writing, about the power structures of academe, and so on. And these

issues arise most acutely for those who are already established and, within these, for those who are members of the already dominant group of white males. For them, if ventures into postmodernism are not to represent simply an attempt at the restoration of their shaky authority as purveyors of truth (even if it is that the whole concept is a lot more complicated than it was previously thought to be), and if it is to be more than another play for status within academe on the part of those who already hold, as a group, most of the positions of power, then there has to be a fundamental questioning of the way they go about their craft.

One aspect of this which is highly symptomatic revolves around the question of 'style', and in particular writing-style. Much writing in and about postmodernism verges on the pretentious, and on occasions the virtually incomprehensible to those not in a (fairly small) group. Moreover 'the left' is not immune from this (and not only among the postmodernists) – and indeed has provided over the years some of the worst examples of undemocratic writing. It is an issue which I should like to see debated, and that is why I raise it now.

For it occurred to me again while reading Soja's book. *Postmodern Geographies* has a strong, central argument, one which is extremely important to communicate, and one which might in general terms be accepted at least in part by many social scientists, whether or not they agreed in detail either with the manner of getting there or with whether it was demonstrated in practice by Soja's own examples. The book is full of rich insights and thought-provoking connections and ideas. I learned a lot from reading it. But the presentation of the argument is bemusing.

First, there is the question of structure. The book begins with a section called 'Preface and Postscript' and its opening sentences are:

> Combining a Preface with a Postscript seems a particularly apposite way to introduce (and conclude) a collection of essays on postmodern geographies. It signals right from the start an intention to tamper with the familiar modalities of time, to shake up the normal flow of the linear text to allow other, more 'lateral' connections to be made.

In fact, what follows is a very conventionally structured argument (for which we should perhaps be grateful), the only 'novelty' being that there is overlap between some of the chapters, presumably an effect of this being a (well-reworked) collection of past articles. Most conventionally, the considerable amount of history which the book presents (for instance, about the development of the social/spatial line of thought amongst geographers) is both structured in an extraordinarily linear manner and leads with an ineluctable inexorability to the author and his current

argument. Far from 'tampering with the familiar modalities of time', or 'shaking up the normal flow of the linear text' and so forth, it imposes an order, an order which is linear, and of a particular linearity. Its function is to ratify the present, the contribution which is to come. This is not, of course, unusual. There have been a few such 'histories' written recently, with the apparent authority of the overseer, where many of us involved recognize neither our individual roles nor the play as a whole. What makes it particularly jarring in this book, though, is the fact that it contradicts so completely both those opening sentences and the expressed commitment to multiple voices and plurality. One effect of this is that it leads to problems with the construction of Soja's own argument. By focusing so unremittingly on one characteristic (historicism), and homing in on all examples which exemplify his point, he misses other themes, other examples, and indeed counter-examples. Just looking within geography itself, there was surely a long period, in the early and middle decades of this century, when geography as an academic discipline was intellectually immobilized by its exclusive focus on 'space' and its insistence that there was a world of purely spatial laws, spatial causes, and spatial relations.[2] It does not indeed seem so long ago that a great number of us were spending our intellectual energies trying to combat this very characteristic (Massey, 1984)! This was a discipline which could not have been less 'historicist'.[3]

But another effect of the linear way in which Soja constructs his history is that it omits, not just other themes, but other voices. It has a hermetic coherence which excludes deviant contributions. Non-Marxist geographers, for instance, are not heard from very much. Again, in complete contrast with the promise of the first paragraph of the book, there is little simultaneity here, just a procession of those *who are seen to have been* dominant or important. It is a disappointment because it belies the evident democratic intent. It is very un-postmodern in the best sense of postmodern.

In contrast, however, to the conventionality of the overall structure, the language in which the argument is couched is arcane and tortured. Presentations which play with form, which take a delight in their own artistry, are surely to be applauded, but the taste this book left with me was one of pomposity rather than of an attempt to communicate. There has been much debate recently about the construction of texts, and the effects and implications of different modes of construction. The case of the linear history was an example of this, and here we see a similar effect in relation to linguistic style. *Postmodern Geographies* left at least this reader (and I know I am not the only one; it has been the subject of some discussion) wondering what the author was trying to achieve. The concern most often expressed is that this kind of writing is less about communica-

tion than about self-presentation. This is a difficult issue, and I realize that to some extent at least it is subjective. Moreover, in this case I have some sympathy in the sense that Soja is trying to get geographical issues on to the agenda of the intellectual left. Writing to one's audience is an important skill, and I can well understand if he felt that the only way to gatecrash those august portals was to write like too many of them do. I suppose all I am arguing is that we should try to resist the temptation. For, if those of us who would in some way or measure sign up under the banner of postmodernism are to avoid the accusation of using the claimed potential democracy of the message simply to show off to each other, then we have to be very careful how, and for whom, we write. This of course applies to all of us, not just those who align with postmodernism. It is just that postmodernists' proclamations against authority, and their explicitly stated concern with the nature of the text, make such writing in their case particularly ironic. Nor am I trying to make the case that everything we write should be 'for the proletariat' otherwise known in the United Kingdom as the man (sic) on the Clapham omnibus. Styles will, and should, vary with the audience addressed (which is not the same as falling into their bad habits). It is not a question of being anti-intellectual, either; indeed it is in part bound up with precisely the distinction between being an *intellectual* and being an *academic*.

Moreover, the issue is reinforced in Soja's book because we are given clues as to what he was trying to establish himself *as*. We are told, for instance, that the author once went for a trip around Los Angeles with Fredric Jameson and Henri Lefebvre. What are we to make of this information? Perhaps what is being communicated is the sense of an in-crowd, and the fact that the author may be part of it. Thus, Soja refers to Jameson: 'Fredric Jameson, perhaps the pre-eminent American Marxist literary critic' (p. 62). Jameson repays the compliment: 'that new spatiality implicit in the post-modern (which Ed Soja's *Postmodern Geographies* now places on the agenda in so eloquent and timely a fashion)' (1989, p. 45). Soja refers to Harvey: 'A brilliant example of this flexible halfway house of Late Modern Marxist geography is Harvey's recent paper . . .' (p. 73) and Harvey is duly quoted on the back of Soja's book: 'One of the most challenging and stimulating books ever written on the thorny issue . . .'. On the back of Harvey's book we have Soja: 'Few people have penetrated the heartland of contemporary cultural theory and critique as explosively or as insightfully as David Harvey'.

Now, let us be clear what is being argued here. First of all, on the particular issue of quotes on the back of books, it is not sour grapes! Many of us are asked to participate in this kind of thing, and quite a few refuse. I realize that the pressure initially comes from publishers. It is part of the advertising to have '"I think it is absolutely wonderful" – Big Name' or

'"Best thing since sliced bread" – Important Academic' on a book. It establishes, supposedly, its credentials. I also realize that the competitive pressures towards this kind of thing are probably far worse in the USA than the ones I know in the United Kingdom. But still, ought we to go along with it? My own reasons for refusing in the past to write such plaudits have been based on straightforward dislike of the big-name syndrome and the individualism (and competitiveness) it implies. At least those of us supposedly on the left could refuse to participate on the grounds both of anti-elitism and of the recognition that research and the development of ideas is in reality (and could be even more) more of a collective process than that. Perhaps these are issues which we should debate openly.

But second, neither is it being pretended that this is a new phenomenon or specific to these authors. It is neither; and indeed I am sure that the geographers involved here would share some of my reservations. Nor, third and most certainly, is it being argued that we should not be complimentary to each other, and congratulatory on each other's achievements. (Soja can be very nasty about less eminent figures – 'self-serving' is one adjective he employs, on p. 73.)

The combination of all these characteristics of style and presentation is, however, alienating. It seems designed to create a sense of a centre and a periphery. If the arguments cited earlier are correct and academics (and especially white male academics) today are feeling that there *is* a loss of status, a feeling that we (they) are not being regarded with the customary awe (at least among those from whom most academics are accustomed to receive it – those on the currently fashionable 'margins' never cared much for most of us anyway), then this is not the way to regain any kind of respect. This kind of response to a crisis chimes only too well with that negative aspect of postmodernist analysis which can only confirm the mutual incomprehensibility of self-defining groups, and greet it with a shrug of indifferent shoulders. On the other hand, it is a style which is in total contradiction to that more emancipatory aspect of postmodernism, the pulling down of hierarchies, the entry of the previously marginalized into the central forum of debate.

On page 74 of his book, in the middle of all this, Soja writes:

> This reconstituted critical human geography must be attuned to the emancipatory struggles of all those who are peripheralized and oppressed by the specific geography of capitalism (and existing socialism as well) – exploited workers, tyrannized peoples, dominated women.

The comment in the margin of my copy is unprintable.

Difference and distance

But that quotation reveals something else as well. For it is not just in terms of style and textual strategy that *Postmodern Geographies* is ambivalent in its relation to postmodernism. So it is in the content of its theoretical stance and its arguments.

That quotation reveals on the one hand the recognition that a simple dualism of capital versus labour is not enough. Notions of peripherality, and of tyrannized peoples and dominated women get a mention. Yet, on the other hand, the thing by which they are peripheralized, tyrannized or dominated is assumed to be – uniquely – the geography of *the mode of production* (capitalism or 'existing socialism'). It recognizes that there are more things in life than can be captured in the classic formulation, but it does not really take them on board.

This is not an ambivalence particular to that quotation. It is present throughout the book. The existence of racism and sexism, and the need to refer to them, is recognized, but it is assumed throughout, either explicitly or implicitly, that the only axis of power which matters in relation to these distinct forms of domination is that which stems fairly directly from the relations of production. No other relations of power and dominance are seriously addressed. The fact that patriarchy, for instance, is not reducible to the terms of a debate on modes of production, is not considered. Indeed, to take the point further, modernity itself is defined entirely in relation to capitalism, at times seeming almost equivalent to it. Thus, in the key section on the deconstruction and reconstruction of modernity, an initially rich and broad-ranging definition is step by step narrowed down. We move from a recognition that 'the experience of modernity captures a broad mesh of sensibilities' (p. 25) and an argument (still very broad in what it potentially encompasses) that 'spatiality, temporality, and social being can be seen as the abstract dimensions which together comprise all facets of human existence' (p. 25). The breadth of this statement is confirmed by the definition of social being as 'revolving around the constitution of society, the production and reproduction of social relations, institutions, and practices' (p. 25). Yet within a few pages this focus has been reduced, and modernization, each accelerated period of which is seen as giving birth to new forms of modernism, and which becomes conflated with modernity, is reduced to capitalism: 'Modernization can be directly linked to the many different "objective" processes of structural change that have been associated with the ability of capitalism to develop and survive ... This defining association between modernization and the survival of capitalism is crucial ... Modernization ... is a continuous process of societal restructuring ... that arises primarily from

the historical and geographical dynamics of modes of production' (pp. 26–7).

Yet between the last two of these statements there is a fleeting moment of doubt, of acknowledgement that it is not as simple as this. 'Modernization', it is conceded, 'is not entirely the product of some determinative inner logic of capitalism, but neither is it a rootless and ineluctable idealization of history' (p. 27). Of course, it partly depends on how you want to define modernization, but there is clearly here a drawing-back from the earlier simple equation of it with capitalism. Yet the revised formulation is also unsatisfactory. The alternatives are not, in fact, limited to a single determinative inner logic on the one hand and total rootlessness on the other. For one thing, and quite apart from the ramifications of wider debates, there are other axes of social power relations by which our current societies are characterized, as well as those of class and capitalism. In Soja's formulation structures such as patriarchy are reduced to noises-off which account for the fact that there is no simple deterministic relation between capitalism and modernization. But why cannot such other axes of power and of social structuring be considered in their own right?[4] Patriarchy is not in the index. Feminism gets one mention, and it is in the passage following the quotation cited at the end of the last section. The passage is dealing with the difficulties of politics in these times and much of it is insightful and useful. The pessimism of some of it is surely warranted. But then: 'Opposition to restructuring is made to appear as extremism [agreed], the very hope of resistance becomes tinged with the absurd [unfortunately true]. Marxism is equated only with totalitarianism [yes, we bitterly recognize that one]; radical feminism becomes the destruction of the family' (p. 74). What? Are these supposed to be equivalent statements? Even if the destruction of the family is a misreading of US radical feminism, is it to be equated with totalitarianism? Or even extremism? There are many feminists, including this one, who would not be unhappy to see the end of 'the family' in its current form (though that is not the same as arguing for its 'destruction').

The characterization of modernism mainly in relation to modes of production is paralleled by an unusual definition of postmodernism. Soja produces a carefully modulated argument here, and is careful too, as we shall see later, in stating his own relation to the wider projects of postmodernism, but in the end the most significant axis of his definition seems to be based around the importance of space. This leads to what seem to me to be some unexpected results. Both Harvey and Mandel turn out to be postmodernists, for instance. And, although the arguments in the chapters on Los Angeles do not establish how or why space is more important now, the arguments about the ontological significance of space

(which are very interesting) are general ones: they are not specific to the recent period. But apart from these apparent confusions there is a deeper issue, for the postmodern questioning of modernism has involved far more than that. Among other things it has challenged the existence of a single coherent narrative of a causal structure to which everything can be related, it has challenged the authority of the single author or viewer,[5] and it has challenged the notion of a single universal subject, constructed – usually with blithe unintentionality – in the shape of a white western male heterosexual. In particular, it has been related to, though it is not equivalent to, the feminist critiques of modernism (see, among many writings in this area, Nicholson, 1990). None of this receives any attention.

Now, a number of people have already pointed out that *Postmodern Geographies* is, after all, a thoroughly *modern* text (for instance, see Dear, 1990; Gregory, 1990). Moreover, to be fair to Soja it should also be pointed out that he himself explicitly *dis*claims any intention to be thoroughly *post*modern (p. 5). None the less, he also says that he does now feel comfortable with postmodernism's 'intentional announcement of a possibly epochal transition *in* both *critical thought* and material life' (p. 5, my emphasis). Moreover, some of his reticence about postmodernism seems, in my view quite legitimately, to come from its frequent abandonment of any progressive project other than multiplicity. But, given this, it is possible to make use of some of the changes in critical thought (including some of the uncomfortably searching questions posed by postmodernism) both to address the ways in which modernism was also profoundly flawed and to retain a position of political commitment. Yet there is here no recognition that modernism was or is profoundly patriarchal (for instance) nor that there are possible alternatives which can go some way to addressing the central dilemmas of modernism without leaving us floating in an apolitical void. Perhaps the strongest case for an alternative of this sort has been made by feminists (for instance, see Mascia-Lees et al., 1989).

That arguments such as these have not been taken on board is evidenced in Soja's treatment of his central concepts of space and place. The chapters on Los Angeles are crucial here. They are innovative and fun, and they reveal some worthwhile insights (although they do not seem to do any more in the end than move from the socio-economic to the spatial. It is unclear how, in the real content of the relation they posit between the social and the spatial they are distinct from much previous writing, or are an exemplification of the theoretical propositions laid out in the early part of the book). But they are designed in a particular way. They are very much long-distance views, overviews (literally, from a height, whether it be from the air or from City Hall).

This raises two issues. First, this is very much a visual approach, and in

modernism, vision was systematically and symptomatically prioritized over other senses. It has been argued to be the sense which allows most mastery; in part deriving from the very detachment which it allows and requires. And second this detachment, and the authority of the viewer which it helps to construct, is underscored in *Postmodern Geographies* by the very vantage points which Soja chooses to look from. The question of how one presents spaces, places and local cultures is a complex and unresolved one, or certainly that is true of how to do it democratically. The stance which Soja adopts is similar to that from which he writes his history. But such a stance ignores the major debates about the difficulties of such an approach. The work of Clifford and others has already been referred to. The collection by Clifford and Marcus (1986) is precisely concerned with how one constructs a text adequately to take account of the problems both of what he (Clifford) calls 'visualism' and of the recognition and reporting of distinct views and interpretations which are not simply absorbed into and re-presented by the 'author'. These writers, and others in the same vein, have in turn been criticized by feminists on a number of grounds:[6] for the degree to which the complexity of the text can lead to such obscurity that few can understand; for the lack of recognition that they still remain unquestionably 'the authors'; for the introspective self-regard which some postmodern strategies can produce among anthropologists themselves; perhaps most of all, and which is related to commitment, for a lack of regard to the question of whom they are speaking *for*. So these issues are complex and certainly unresolved. But they do, none the less, have to be faced. At the very end of 'Taking Los Angeles apart', in the Afterwords, Soja himself says 'I have been looking at Los Angeles from different points of view' (p. 247), but he hasn't, at least not in the way in which many feminist or postmodernist arguments would have us do. The views are all quite clearly his. He argues that 'Totalizing visions, attractive though they may be, can never capture all the meanings and significations of the urban ... There are too many *auteurs* to identify' (p. 247). Yet, in spite of his best intentions, this is what he has produced. Too few *auteurs*, too much *hauteur*!

Exclusively masculine modernism

Blue Velvet and *Blade Runner*

Harvey's *The Condition of Postmodernity* is also, like *Postmodern Geographies*, and especially given the intrinsic difficulty of the argument it is developing, a major achievement.

But here again, reading it as a feminist, I was troubled. In some ways it is difficult to know where to get into this argument, partly because the book is such a seamless whole and partly because the main problem is precisely one of absence.

The absence is that of other points of view. Whereas Soja's ventures into postmodernism at least provoke him into wrestling with the necessity of recognizing the existence of a multiplicity of '*auteurs*', Harvey's modernism is constructed (or perhaps I should say unreconstructed) around an assumed universal whose particular characteristics are not even recognized. Women, for instance, do not figure in the development of the argument, and neither does the possibility of feminist readings of the issues under consideration. The same could be said of other voices currently subordinated in this society and its dominant lines of intellectual debate. The issue is not confined to feminism. Nor is it that there should be a few paragraphs here and there on 'women, ethnic minorities, etc'. It is that the dominant view is assumed to be the universal, and that view is white, male, heterosexual, western.

The analyses of film are symptomatic. Of David Lynch's film *Blue Velvet*, Harvey writes:

> In the more postmodernist format of the contemporary cinema we find, in a film like *Blue Velvet*, the central character revolving between two quite incongruous worlds – that of a conventional 1950s small-town America with its high school, drugstore culture, and a bizarre, violent, sex-crazed underworld of drugs, dementia, and sexual perversion. It seems impossible that these two worlds should exist in the same space, and the central character moves between them, unsure which is the true reality, until the two worlds collide in a terrible denouement. (p. 48)

This is inadequate on a number of grounds. First, in what sense is this an *incongruous* juxtaposition of worlds? Rather than it seeming 'impossible that these two worlds should exist in the same space', they are in fact necessary to each other; they are mutually constitutive, mutually dependent. Male violence, for instance, is a large part of what maintains the institution of marriage and its variants in contemporary society (see Valentine, 1989) and 'monogamy' has frequently been upheld by its negation, by outside interests, whether these took the form of nineteenth-century prostitution for the male, or the more 'egalitarian' (?) something-on-the-side more typical of today's professional middle classes. Prurience is one of the requirements for the existence of pornography. The film makes this mutuality clear itself in a jokey way when at the end it returns to the primary colours, white fences, and nodding flowers of small-town

USA with its waving, smiling, fireman with no fires to put out (is this really any less 'bizarre' than the other world?), and the robin on the window sill (over which they all coo) has in its beak a writhing bug, tortured in the midst of the rural idyll, and necessarily so in order that the robin may live. The question is not the existence of the underside, but whether or not we see it.

However, the meaning of a text is almost always a site of contestation or at least of implicit disagreement (Denzin, 1988; Grossberg, 1986). And so it is with *Blue Velvet*. Indeed, in the case of this film the debate has been explicit and extensive, particularly given Lynch's own admirable refusal to be categorized into any particular genre (for instance see Rabkin, 1986). It is therefore curious that Harvey does not refer to this. In contrast to Harvey's interpretation, Lynch himself has said, for instance:

'*Blue Velvet* is a trip beneath the surface of a small American town' (in Chute, 1986, p. 32)

(no intimations of incongruity here) and:

> It's like saying that once you've discovered there are heroin addicts in the world and they're murdering people to get money, can you be happy? It is a tricky question. Real ignorance is bliss. That's what *Blue Velvet* is about. (Rabkin, 1986, p. 55)

Among the other possible interpretations of the film are feminist ones. The film is not just about the two sides of US (etc.) culture; but, as Lynch has himself said,

> It's also a probe into the subconscious or a place where you face things that you don't normally face. (Chute, 1986, p. 32)

In this regard, Harvey's characterization, in neutral fashion, of 'the central character' fails to catch a crucial, and necessary, fact. This is a *gendered* central character, and it is male. The two worlds are indeed one, and they are two sides of masculine identity. *Blue Velvet*

> operates with a series of simplistic oppositions – pretty-pretty suburbia versus inner-city decay, night versus day, virginal romance versus sadistic sex, purity and horror, and so on. As Jeff makes his Oedipal journey into the underworld, in this cartoon psychoanalytic drama, it soon becomes clear that these two versions of masculinity, the dark and the light, are really two sides of the same coin. (Moore, 1988, p. 187)

What the film is about, here, is 'masculinity having to face up to its darker side' (ibid., p. 187).

It is not casually the fact, nor accidental, that the central character is

male (and heterosexual). For, moreover, the two worlds, or sides of masculinity, are crucially represented in the film by – guess what – women. There is Sandy, of the suburban appearance of health and order (although Lynch is true to his theme again and even she has spots under the make-up), and there is Dorothy, of the world of wild sexuality and violence, the kind of thing they speak of in the suburbs, if at all, as disgusting. Woman stands as choices for men; as their Other. Their function is to help some man find his identity. As Moore (1988) points out in her article 'Getting a bit of the Other – the pimps of postmodernism', this is a characteristic which runs through much of postmodernism, from its initiating theorists (Lacan et al.), through Baudrillard (at times quite laughably so – see his writing on New York in *America* [1988]), to film: 'the world of the feminine becomes a way of men exploring, rejecting or reconstructing their masculinity, of "getting a bit of the other" at the expense of women' (pp. 187–8).

Further, the corollary of this is that women themselves are contained within one or the other of the alternative categories; they themselves have no option (Denzin, 1988; Gledhill, 1978). It is not just that *Blue Velvet* presents a world which denigrates women (McGuigan and Huck, 1986 – and I would argue that this is a problem not of the film, which is restrained in its portrayal, but of the world it is depicting), but that it makes the postmodern message of the film, the one drawn out by Harvey, exclusive to men.

Finally, even the postmodernists actually cannot face up to it. 'Although the insecurity of identity that these films offer is pleasurable, it can also be unsettling if security is not restored by the end of the film' (Moore, p. 188). Jeff settles down with Sandy; he is also in some measure instrumental in what he (though not necessarily she) would see as the 'saving' of Dorothy (that old male thing about their individual, special, relation to women of the *demi-monde*). The good thing about *Blue Velvet* is that it does not let us/you/him off the hook. The robin on the window sill is still torturing the beetle. Denzin (1988) argues that all this may reflect the contradictoriness of these postmodern times, but also, perhaps more acutely, observes:

> It seems that postmodern individuals want films like *Blue Velvet* for in them they can have their sex, their myths, their violence and their politics, all at the same time. (p. 472)

And safely, one might add, since it's all in a movie. But even then, 'the Other' cannot be *too* challenging, at least not to the supposed universal – the white, heterosexual male. While, as we have seen:

> This 'getting a bit of the other' seems . . . to depend on women as the gateway to the other world . . .

and while it is also true that

> increasingly black people and black culture is [sic] used to signify something radically different,

on the other hand,

> Some kinds of 'otherness' remain just too threatening to be colonised in this manner – homosexuality for example seems to be seen as far too disturbing and difficult to offer this kind of escapism. (Moore, 1988, p. 186)

But Harvey misses all this. Had he wanted, this would have been an excellent opportunity to demonstrate the problems for feminism of current actually existing postmodernism. But if the problem of the postmodernists is that while celebrating the existence of the Other most of us are consigned to being means of constructing the identity of white, heterosexual men, the problem of the modernists is that they do not see us, really, at all. Or, if they do, it is as somehow deviations from the norm, troubling exceptions to the(ir) rule.

And so it is with Harvey. As Denzin (1988) points out, the hegemonic reading of *Blue Velvet* (by the *New York Times*, the *New Yorker*, *Christian Century, National Review, Playboy*, etc.) did not analyse these gender issues in the film. Neither does Harvey; and for classically modernist reasons. In these readings of the movie, masculinity is not in question. The male is not even recognized to be gendered. He is the universal.

But it is perhaps unfair to concentrate too much on the analysis of this particular film. Harvey's reference to it was after all quite a brief one, and it occurred in the context of a wider discussion. Let us look, then, at one of the more extended analyses of film which are to be found towards the end of the book and to which a whole chapter (ch. 18) is devoted. Let us take the case of *Blade Runner*. One of the key threads in this movie is the struggle by the female replicant Rachel to prove that she is not a replicant. However, in order to do this, and thereby to survive, replicants have to prove a history, and their relationship to it; they must, most crucially, enter and establish a place in the symbolic order. And the symbolic order used in *Blade Runner* is that of Freud. So Harvey, drawing on this analysis of the film, which as he says is that of Giuliana Bruno (1987), describes Rachel's (ultimately successful) attempt at survival through the establishment of a (human) identity. As he writes,

> But she can re-enter the symbolic realm of a truly human society only by acknowledging the overwhelming power of the Oedipal figure, the father ... In submitting to Deckard (trusting him, deferring to him, and ultimately submitting to him physically), she learns the meaning of human love and the essence of ordinary sociality. In killing the replicant Leon as he is about to kill Deckard, she provides the ultimate evidence of the capacity to act as Deckard's woman. (1989, p. 312)

There are a number of points to be made here. First of all, Harvey does not comment on the particularity of this process of a replicant finding an identity as a woman. She learns the meaning of love through submission (Harvey's word) to a man; she establishes an identity – as 'Deckard's woman'. It is not an appetising prospect, and one wonders whether, if survival had not been dependent on it, she would have bothered. This point is a more significant one than it perhaps sounds in that one of the things which Harvey misses is that Rachel is not just establishing *an* identity, she is establishing a sexual and specifically a *female*, identity. In Bruno's terms 'To survive for a time, the android has to accept the fact of sexual difference, the sexual identity which the entry into language requires' (1987, p. 71).

It is interesting, and surely significant, moreover, that it is precisely and only at this point that Harvey disagrees with Bruno (nor, possibly, is it insignificant that he talks of Bruno as 'he' and calls her Giuliano!). Bruno writes:

> Of all the replicants, only one, Rachel, succeeds in making the journey. She assumes a sexual identity, becomes a woman, and loves a man ... Rachel accepts the paternal figure and follows the path to a 'normal', adult, female, sexuality: she identifies her sex by first acknowledging the power of the other, the father, a man. But the leader of the replicants, Roy Batty, refuses the symbolic castration which is necessary to enter the symbolic order. (1987, p. 71)

It is precisely this contrast with which Harvey disagrees. He puts Roy's refusal simply down to the fact that survival in his case is unlikely anyway. I do not know which interpretation is more valid in relation to the film, but it is interesting that this disagreement precisely underlines Harvey's unwillingness to engage on the terrain of sexual identity. For that, of course, might further undermine the supposed universality of one fraction of humanity, the heterosexual male.

This disagreement with Bruno, moreover, is linked back to the earlier lack of comment on the manner of Rachel's acquisition of an identity. Bruno makes it clear that what is involved is submission, and that some

may go along with it, and others may refuse. Although he recognizes submission, it is not seen as so problematical a process by Harvey, and later he clearly believes that Rachel really does fall in love with Deckard. Thus, for instance, the possibility that she might be feigning, in order to survive, does not seem to occur to him. Yet women have often had to resort to feigning, in various ways, and often with far less at stake than survival (as another recent movie *When Harry Met Sally* recently pointed out). Moreover, not only does Harvey believe that Rachel really falls for Deckard, but he is disappointed because

> The strongest social bond between Deckard and the replicants in revolt – the fact that they are both controlled and enslaved by a dominant corporate power – never generates the slightest hint that a coalition of the oppressed might be forged between them. (1989, p. 313)

Now that quite took my breath away. On page 312 we are reading all this about Rachel having to submit to Deckard, and on page 313 we are wondering why she does not enter into an alliance with him. The wider political implications of this kind of male-based analysis have recently been analysed by Hart (1989), and I shall return to the point in a later section. But wishing for coalitions of the oppressed without first analysing the contradictions and power relations within those potential coalitions is to court political failure.

What illustrations illustrate

In the chapter on postmodernism in part I of *The Condition of Postmodernity* there are five pictorial illustrations. Every one of them is of a woman, in every case a naked woman. Harvey makes no comment on this.

His commentaries ponder the superimposition of ontologically different worlds, or the difference between Manet and Rauschenberg, but they are oblivious to what is being represented, how it is being represented and from whose point of view, and the political effects of such representations. David Salle's *Tight as Houses* is the most evident case of this, where Harvey gives no indication that he has grasped the simple pun of the title and its clearly sexist content. Whose gaze is this painting painted from and for? Who could get the 'joke'? The painting is treated with deadly seriousness by Harvey, who cites Taylor (1987) on how it is a collage bringing together 'incompatible source materials as an alternative to choosing between them' (Harvey, p. 49). My own response, as someone who was potentially *in* that picture, and who saw it with completely different eyes, was: 'Here we go, another pretentious male artist who still thinks naked

women are naughty'. Any deeper meaning in the picture (though it was hardly intellectually startling when revealed) was entirely obliterated, from my reading position, by the sexism of the image used to convey it.[7] The painting assumes a complicit male viewer. For women, in contrast, the position is different: 'to look at and enjoy the sites of patriarchal culture we women must become nominal transvestites. We must assume a masculine position or masochistically enjoy the sight of woman's humiliation' (Pollock, 1988, p. 85).

To push this issue of positionality further, one can consider the interpretation of those who figure in the illustrations. Try, for instance, looking at Harvey's plates 1.7 and 1.8 (Titian's *Venus d'Urbino* and Manet's *Olympia* – dubbed 'seminal' by Harvey) while reading the following:

> I shall be represented analytically and hung
> in great museums. The bourgeoisie will coo
> at such an image of a river-whore. They call it Art.
>
> Maybe. He is concerned with volume, space.
> I with the next meal . . .
>
> . . . It makes me laugh. His name
> is Georges. They tell me he's a genius.
> There are times he does not concentrate
> and stiffens for my warmth.
> (Duffy 'Standing Female Nude', 1985)

But this is a first response, drawn from the anger I felt on first reading the chapter. Let us, therefore, look more seriously. For apart from this very evident level of sexism in the selection and use of illustrations, there is a deeper problem. By not getting to grips with the feminist analyses and critiques of modernism, Harvey both misses an important aspect of its character and, in consequence, fails fully to understand the nature of the criticisms directed against it. Moreover, this whole feminist debate centrally relates to Harvey's core concerns – modernism, postmodernism, space and politics.

It is useful to begin this argument from Manet, who is widely recognized as being one of the founders of modernism in painting. In his analyses of Manet, Harvey follows Crimp (1985), particularly in the comparisons with Titian and with Rauschenberg. Indeed, it is presumably because he is drawing on Crimp's analysis that Harvey selects that particular Rauschenberg (another voyeuristic view of a woman – *Persimmon*) rather than any other combine of his which could be drawn on to make the same points (about collage, reproduction, juxtaposition and unrelatedness) – see, for

instance, Hewison (1990). Yet the analysis of Manet's *Olympia* is curiously limited. Neither it, nor the wider consideration of 'time–space compression and the rise of modernism as a cultural force' (ch. 16), analyse a theme which should be central to Harvey's project – the socio-political implications of the spatial organization of the painting itself and of the modernist art of which it is exemplary. This is all the more curious because the article which follows Crimp's in the Foster collection is on precisely this subject. It is called 'The discourse of others; feminists and postmodernism' (Owens, 1985), and it is not referred to by Harvey.

It is now a well-established argument, from feminists but not only from feminists, that modernism both privileged vision over the other senses and established a *way* of seeing from the point of view of an authoritative, privileged, and male, position (Irigaray, 1978; Owens, 1985; Pollock, 1988).[8] The privileging of vision impoverishes us through deprivation of other forms of sensory perception. 'In our culture, the predominance of the look over smell, taste, touch, hearing, has brought about an impoverishment of bodily relations . . . the moment the look dominates, the body loses its materiality' (Irigaray, 1978, p. 50). But, and more important from the point of view of the argument here, the reason for the privileging of vision is precisely its supposed detachment. Such detachment, of course, can have its advantages, but it is also necessarily a 'detached' view from a particular point of view. Detached does not here mean disinterested. One of the aims of some postmodern artists has been precisely to investigate the interests modernist detachment serves. And, in a widely quoted passage, Irigaray has pointed out that 'investment in the look is not privileged in women as in men. More than the other senses, the eye objectifies and masters' (1978, p. 50). And in the illustrations which Harvey has selected the patriarchal content is doubled by the fact that not only do we have here the classic modernist male authoritative gaze but it is looking at – very particular representations of – women.

Now, as Pollock (1988) points out, 'it is a striking fact that many of the canonical works held up as the founding monuments of modern art treat precisely with this area, sexuality, and this form of it, commercial exchange'; 'it is normal to see women's bodies as the territory across which men artists claim their modernity'.[9] And, she goes on, 'we must enquire why the territory of modernism so often is a way of dealing with masculine sexuality and its sign, the bodies of women – why the nude, the brothel, the bar? What relation is there between sexuality, modernity and modernism?' (p. 54; see also Duncan, 1990).[10] Chadwick (1990) and others have made the same point, Chadwick talking of 'the extent to which the major paintings . . . associated with the development of modern art wrest their formal and stylistic innovations from an erotically based assault on the female form' (p. 266).

There are many lines of analysis, argument and debate which run from here. There is the issue of what this form of representation does to women, how it actively produces conceptualizations of what is feminine and what is masculine, how it influences the form of gender relations, how it thereby contributes to the physical and social circumscribing of women's lives (Cowie, 1978; Pollock, 1988). For, *contra* the overall force of Harvey's argument, which itself belies occasional individual statements of resistance to economism, representation is not merely reflection; it is itself an active force in moulding social relations and social understanding.

But there is also the issue of what it means to ignore these debates about modernism and its ways of seeing. For the implications are not 'confined' to the 'specific' and 'local' issue of feminism. Opposition to this authoritarian gaze, and to the claims it makes, is central to the critique of modernism made by some postmodernists. It is, moreover, a crucial point at which issues about theorizing, about the validity of 'master narratives' and so forth relate most intimately to issues concerning spatial organization. There has, further, been substantial work in this area amongst cultural geographers. The writing of Cosgrove (1984) on the use and implications of perspective in the concept of landscape is an obvious example. By not taking account of the feminist literature, therefore, a whole line of argument central to the relationship between modernity, space, and social relations has been closed off.

'Other' spaces of modernism

The spaces of modernism which are mostly celebrated are the public spaces of the city. It was in the rapidly growing western cities, especially Paris, that modernism was born. And the standard literature from Baudelaire onwards is replete with descriptions of boulevards and cafés, of fleeting, passing glances and of the cherished anonymity of the crowd. The spatial and social reorganization, and flourishing, of urban life was an essential condition for the birth of the new era. But that city was also gendered. Moreover, it was gendered in ways which relate directly to spatial organization.

First, it was gendered in the very general sense of the distinction between the public and the private (Wolff, 1985). This period of the mid-nineteenth century was a crucial one in the development of the notion of 'the separation of spheres' and the confinement of women, ideologically if not for all women in practice, to the 'private' sphere of the suburbs and the home (Davidoff and Hall, 1983; Hall, 1981). The public city which is celebrated in the enthusiastic descriptions of the dawn of modernism was a city for men. The boulevards and cafés, and still more the bars and

brothels, were for men – the women who did go there were for male consumption. Nineteenth-century Paris presented very different impressions and possibilities for men and for women.[11] Thus Pollock (1988), in thinking through the relation between 'space and social processes' (her terms) in relation to art history, argues that one possible approach might lie 'in considering not only the spaces represented, or the spaces *of* the representation, but the social spaces from which the representation is made and its reciprocal positionalities' (p. 66).

But the social spaces from which the generally cited central cultural products of modernism were made were the public spaces of the city – the spaces of men. This has a number of implications. First, many of the paintings (even, or perhaps especially, those of women) were set in places where women of the same class as the painter simply could not go. Thus, to pick up again the theme of *Olympia*, Pollock discussing the picture alongside that of the barmaid in Manet's *A Bar at the Folies-Bergères* asks:

> How can a woman relate to the viewing positions proposed by either of these paintings? Can a woman be offered, in order to be denied, imaginary possession of Olympia or the barmaid? Would a woman of Manet's class have a familiarity with either of these spaces and its exchanges which could be evoked so that the painting's modernist job of negation and disruption could be effective? ... Would it enter her head as a site of modernity as she experienced it? (1988, pp. 54–5; see also Morgan, 1990)

Indeed, could a woman experience modernity, defined in this way, at all?

Second, one of the key figures embodying the experience of this definition of modernity is the *flâneur*, the stroller in the crowd, observing but not observed. But the *flâneur* is irretrievably male. As Wolff (1985) has argued, the *flâneuse* was an impossibility. In part this is so because 'respectable' women simply could not wander around the streets and parks alone. (This was for reasons of socially constructed 'propriety', but for those 'non-respectable' women who did roam the public spaces movement would still be effectively restricted by the threat of male violence.) In part, the notion of a *flâneuse* is impossible precisely because of the one-way-ness and the directionality of the gaze. *Flâneurs* observed others; they were not observed themselves. And, for reasons which link together the debate on perspective and the spatial organization of painting, and most women's exclusion from the public sphere, the modern gaze belonged (belongs?) to men.[12]

Third, moreover, and reinforcing all of this, the *flâneur*'s gaze was frequently erotic. And woman was, and was *only*, the object of this gaze. Baudelaire's embarrassingly awful views on this are probably now too well

known to need citing again.[13] But once again, the subject, the author, of the whole performance is – not by chance but necessarily in its very construction – male.

What all this together implies is that the experience of modernism/modernity as it is customarily recorded, the production of what are customarily assumed to be its major cultural artefacts, and even its customary definition, are all constructed on and are constructive of particular forms of gender relations and definitions of masculinity and of what it means to be a woman. This is not ('just') to say that modernism was or is patriarchal (this would hardly be news, nor differentiate it from many other periods in history); it is to say that it is not possible fully to understand modernism without taking account of this. To return more directly to Harvey, modernism is about more than a particular articulation of the power relations of time, space and money. Harvey has produced a fascinating, if arguably economistic, exploration of the relation between the definition, production and experience of space, on the one hand, and modes of production and class formation, on the other. But it completely misses other ways, other power relations, in which space is also structured and experienced. Harvey mentions none of the arguments which have been addressed in this section. He discusses suburbanization at a number of points, but does not mention the separation of spheres. Or again, he discusses how Frédéric Moreau, hero of Flaubert's *L'Education sentimentale*, 'glides in and out of the differentiated spaces of the city, with the same sort of ease that money and commodities change hands. The whole narrative structure of the book likewise gets lost in perpetual postponements of decisions precisely because Frédéric has enough inherited money to enjoy the luxury of not deciding'. Comments Harvey: 'it was the possession of money that allowed the present to slip through Frédéric's grasp, while opening social space to casual penetration. Evidently, time, space and money could be invested with rather different significances, depending upon the conditions and possibilities of trade-off between them' (pp. 263–4). Well, yes, nearly but not quite. Frédéric, as he casually penetrated these social spaces, did have another little advantage in life too.

As Pollock (1988, p. 5) has very persuasively argued:

> A feminist historical materialism does not ... substitute gender for class but deciphers the intricate interdependence of class and gender, as well as race, in all forms of historical practice. None the less there is a strategic priority in insisting upon recognition of gender power and of sexuality as historical forces of significance as great as any of the other matrices privileged in Marxism or other forms of social history or cultural analysis ... a feminist analysis of the founding conditions of modernism in the

> gendered and eroticized terrain of the modern city directly challenges an authoritative social historical account which categorically refuses feminism as a necessary corollary.

The implications of ignoring feminist analyses go beyond the 'local' issue of gender relations.

Moreover, there is a further point, which can be explored by inquiring what happened to women who were painting pictures in and of this period. The point is not that there were some and that they are rarely considered by male art historians and other commentators, though this is true (see Chadwick, 1990). The point is, not that women painted, but that what they painted and the way they painted was different. This occurs in a number of ways, each to do with the relation between space and social organization. First, there is the fact that, as would be expected from the preceding discussion, the paintings are of different places/spaces from those of men. They are not of brothels, or of the apparently endless fascination of the *folies*, they are not of backstage at the theatre; they are much more frequently of the domestic sphere, of balconies and gardens, and, when they move outside, the parts of the public sphere they deal with (a box at the theatre, a park) are distinct from the main preoccupations of male painters. Second, however, the spatial organization of the paintings themselves is sometimes also distinct. Thus, for example, Pollock (1988) points to the fact that they may be organized in such a way that the viewer is drawn more into the picture itself, reducing the feeling of the detachment of the spectator, and reducing also thereby the authority of the spectator's gaze. Moreover, this refocusing is also sometimes brought about by a clear disruption of standard Enlightenment notions of perspective; this is a different way of representing space. Last, it is arguable that this in turn may bring back 'into the picture' the senses other than vision, thus deprioritizing at least a little vision in relation to the other senses and thereby challenging one of the central tenets of modernism-as-it-is-normally-described.

And that extended hyphenation is, of course, the point. It has been argued by a number of women that the usual view of modernism, and perhaps most specifically of its art, is frequently only a partial conception of modernity (for instance, see Wolff, 1985). If that is true of many of the male 'authorities' on the subject, it is *a fortiori* the case with Harvey who, through his whole argument (and this is a more general concern about the discussion) draws only on mainstream (or what was to become mainstream) culture, whether this be gallery art, famous architects, or big-budget movies. This leads to an unnecessarily monolithic view of the modernist period; it shifts the definition of what it was and, by missing

out the voices on the margins and in the interstices of what was accepted, it also misses the full force of the critique which those voices, among them feminists, were making of the modernism he does discuss.[14]

All this becomes fully apparent in another way when Harvey considers the work of Cindy Sherman. She is postmodern and female. Harvey clearly does not like what she does and is more than a little disturbed by it. He describes visiting an exhibition of her photographs:

> The photographs depict seemingly different women drawn from many walks of life. It takes a little while to realize, with a certain shock, that these are portraits of the same woman in different guises. Only the catalogue tells you that it is the artist herself who is that woman. The parallel with Raban's insistence upon the plasticity of human personality through the malleability of appearances and surfaces is striking, as is the self-referential positioning of the authors to themselves as subjects. Cindy Sherman is considered a major figure in the postmodern movement. (p. 7)

There is a whole host of problems here. Later, Harvey refers to Sherman and a range of other postmodernists in a discussion of the current crisis of representation. That there *is* such a crisis is not in doubt. But Harvey here (p. 322) and throughout the book identifies the cause of this crisis as 'the experience of time–space compression in recent years, under the pressures of the turn to more flexible modes of accumulation' (p. 322).[15] After all the feminist debate about representation, to which I have just referred, and the directly political critique of modernist representation, it is surely inadequate to put the whole crisis down to time–space compression and flexible accumulation. There was *political* and a specifically feminist criticism of the mode of representation which was dominant prior to the crisis. Much of this postmodern work is thus not just part of a crisis, it is also a social comment. Thus when Harvey writes: 'The interest in Cindy Sherman's photographs (or any postmodern novel for that matter) is that they focus on masks without commenting directly on social meanings other than on the activity of masking itself' (p. 101), he is missing much of the point.[16] Deutsche (1990) in her review of Harvey and Soja has pointed out very clearly that much postmodern art has concerned itself with images precisely to reveal their social importance as sites where meanings, and subjects, are produced. Thus, 'to the extent that this is its goal, postmodernism's concentration on images is emphatically *not* a turn away from, but rather toward, the social' (p. 23). And in this context she refers specifically to the work of Sherman. Crimp (1982) too, whom Harvey cites elsewhere, argues that what Sherman is doing is attacking 'auteurism'.

Moreover, it is not just a general socio-political point which can be drawn from Sherman's photographs, but a specifically feminist one. Harvey says he was shocked to find that all these different images were of 'the same woman'. It is an unintended admission, for that is precisely the effect they are supposed to have on the patriarchal viewer. Thus Owens comments that they

> reflect back at the viewer his own desire (and the spectator posited by this work is invariably male) – specifically the masculine desire to fix the woman in a stable and stabilizing identity. But this is precisely what Sherman's work denies: for while her photographs are always self-portraits, in them the artist never appears to be the same . . . while Sherman may pose as a pin-up, she still cannot be pinned down. (1985, p. 75)

It is, precisely, a way of disrupting the normally dominant pleasures of the patriarchal visual field.

Moreover, maybe she *is* all of these things, *and* they are masks. Sherman's work reveals how socially constructed and how unstable 'gender' is and how, indeed, the last few centuries of western culture has produced a 'femininity' which does indeed have a lot to do with self-presentation, in masks for others, in masquerade (Chadwick, 1990, pp. 358–9; Owens, 1985, p. 75).

Finally, Harvey seems to object particularly to the fact that Sherman took these pictures of herself ('the self-referential positioning of the authors to themselves as subjects'). Would it have been less disturbing had a man taken an authoritative picture of this woman? – like Manet painting Olympia, perhaps?[17]

Gender, then, is a determining factor in cultural production. It must be so also in relation to its interpretation. We have seen this, in this section, in specific relation to modernism. At the end of *The Condition of Postmodernity*, Harvey argues for a recuperation of one form of modernism – Marxism. He recognizes, too, that it must be reworked in order to treat more satisfactorily of difference and 'otherness', and that it is not enough simply to add categories on: they should be present in the analysis from the beginning. Yet in his own analysis of modernism and postmodernism one of the most significant of those 'differences' – that which revolves around gender – is absent.

Politics – and academe

I have great sympathy with the overall projects of both these books. Soja is struggling to be postmodern, but really remaining in many ways

modern; Harvey is quite clearly for modernism but wanting, he says, to change it in ways which will respond to certain inadequacies. I, too, would like to retain strong aspects of what characterizes the modernist project, most particularly its commitment to change, hopefully progressive; I also agree strongly with Harvey's defence of much of what has been achieved in its name. But it is necessary also to recognize the inadequacies of the modernist project in its dominant form. One problem of both these books is that they neither fully recognize the issues nor adequately respond to them. The answers which most postmodernism has so far provided may well be mistaken, but the challenges it poses must surely be addressed.

Moreover, one stream of thought which has been raising many of the same issues for far longer, which has been debating a set of answers which do not fall into the traps of postmodernism, which do not disintegrate into localism (in Lyotard's sense, which has nothing to do with the specifically geographical – see Massey, 1991), which do not abandon theories which have sufficient scope to deal with issues such as gender and class, which are historical and sensitive to differentiation ... is feminism. The list of characteristics just mentioned is taken from Fraser and Nicholson (1988), but many others have been debating similar issues. Other than contributions already mentioned there are, for instance, Flax (1986), Harding (1986, 1987 and many others), Haraway (1983), Jardine (1985) and Morris (1988).

This literature is not mentioned by Soja or Harvey. Not one of the above authors is mentioned by either of them.[18] At a number of points in this paper it has been noted that the potential contributions of feminism have simply been ignored. This is perhaps particularly glaring because so many feminists have written on the issues of space and society which are central to the debate in hand. Why, then, are they not considered? Is it that many men feel they do not have to read the feminist literature? Is it seen as a 'specialism'? Harvey has said (1985) that he likes to think of himself as 'a restless analyst'. It is an attractive and appealing image. But maybe he has not been restless enough. It should not be acceptable that a large part of the central literature is simply missing from what sets out to be a comprehensive overview, and that whole lines of debate are simply ignored.

Fraser and Nicholson mention a number of other features which are potentially characteristic of a new mode of theorizing which is neither modern in the old sense nor postmodern in its usual style. The attention to cultural specificity and to differentiation within society and over time is developed into the statement that such theory 'would be non-universalist. When its focus became cross-cultural or transepochal, its mode of attention would be comparativist rather than universalizing, attuned to changes and contrasts instead of to "covering laws"' (1988,

p. 390–1). I have to say that I am uncertain about this in some ways. (These are confusing times and I think we should be open enough to admit that on some things we may remain undecided.) But this characterization of theory does contrast strongly with Harvey's. Harvey constantly runs together universalism and internationalism. But, often, they are absolutely not the same thing. Indeed in some ways they are potentially antagonistic to each other. A true internationalism is surely a non-starter without the prior recognition of diversity. And the 'universals' on which so much analysis is based are so often in fact quite particular; not universals at all, but white, male, western, heterosexual, what have you. The long attempt to force such universals down unwilling throats is now demonstrating its failure in part precisely by provoking the most reactionary forms of cultural specificity. 'Finally,' write Fraser and Nicholson,

> postmodern-feminist theory would dispense with the idea of a subject of history. It would replace unitary notions of 'women' and 'feminine gender identity' with plural and complexly constructed conceptions of social identity, treating gender as one relevant strand among others, attending also to class, race, ethnicity, age and sexual orientation. (1988, p. 391)

Again, this is easier said than done. But in all kinds of ways, the approaches in the two books which have been discussed here show how poverty-stricken is the analysis, and how open to progressive political criticism is a failure even to wrestle with these problems, and their attendant possibilities. The question of 'authorship' seems to be central. White western men write academic texts and interpret the world for each other; and the universal author of history is understood to be a male, heterosexual and modernizing in the western image. So Harvey fails to understand what Sherman is saying precisely because it is about these things – author(ity), and feminism. Although he discusses perspectivism, for example, and its relation to individualism (for example p. 245) and the modernist 'aura' of the artist as producer (pp. 55 and 245), the full implications are not drawn out and explored. Yet those implications are political, in the widest sense of the word. As Deutsche concludes:

> Postmodernists who problematize the image – artists like Cindy Sherman, Barbara Kruger, Silvia Kolbowski, Mary Kelly, Connie Hatch – reject such vanguard roles. They have been saying for years that, thanks to the recognition that representations are produced by *situated* – not universal – subjects, the world is not so easily mapped anymore. (1990, p. 23)

Feminists, as Pollock points out, 'have nothing to lose with the desecration of Genius. The individualism of which the artist is a prime symbol is gender exclusive' (1988, p. 11).

There are implications also, therefore, for the way we are, and could be, as academics. There are huge questions being raised, in parts of geography, in anthropology and elsewhere, about our role as interpreters of the world. Yet neither of these books addresses these questions. There are issues about the hierarchies within our own fields, and whether we really need to take ourselves *quite* so seriously. *The V-Girls* poke fun at the way we can get out of control. Their subject in this sketch is . . .

Manet's Olympia: posed and skirted

The panel assembles behind a cloth-covered table, a water pitcher, plastic glasses, and sits down. Five dark-haired women, probably in their mid to late twenties: Martha Baer, Jessica Chalmers, Erin Cramer, Andrea Fraser, Marianne Weems. Four wear tailored suits, heavy-framed glasses: the signifiers of High Seriousness. It is time for a panel discussion on 'Manet's Olympia: Posed and Skirted.'

The moderator, fluttery and apologetic, wears a dress.

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.
.

MW: I will open with a note Manet penned just as he began *Olympia* to M. Moron, a florist located a few blocks from his studio.

> Monsieur Moron,
> I cannot stand the geraniums. Please send something pink, and less expensive.
> Yours sincerely,
> Edouard Manet.

This telling reference to money, a worry throughout his life, is echoed in the repetition of the notes to follow.

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.
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MB: It wasn't until very recently, in 1983, that the art historian M.R. Frank made the staggering critical discovery regarding Manet's *Olympia* for which I think we will all be hereafter indebted. In his paper entitled 'Hidden Elements', Frank first noted that there was 'a black person in this painting'. Just two years later, in 1985, S.L. Park wrote 'and we can also see in the near background, just behind the nude, a black person.'

Since that time only one critic, C.M. Paine, has attempted to explicate the extreme belatedness of this discovery. Paine has argued that this tardiness on the part of *Olympia*'s critics follows directly from the fact that so few black people have actually *seen* the painting and that thus museum-goers most versed in this type of analysis have been scanty.

> AF: In his May 11, 1865, letter to Manet, Charles Baudelaire wrote of *Olympia* and I quote: '. . . and the cat (is it a cat, really?) . . .' In my paper today, I would like to return to this fundamental question.
>
> Among the many interpretations of the cat in Manet's *Olympia*, the interpretation by Sir Finding of Hisownimage is here supported with further evidence.
>
> (Grover, 1989, pp. 13–14)

Let me repeat, lest I be misunderstood. This is emphatically *not* to be anti-intellectual. (*The V-Girls* themselves are writers and teachers.) But it *is* to be anti the games of academe. What *The V-Girls* are criticizing are the power relations implicit in the transmission of knowledge and in our institutions of learning.

All this finds its reflection in the wider politics which these books advocate. Here too the difficulties of difference – perhaps, at its simplest, the fact of complexity – are simply erased by the steamroller of an analysis which insists that capital and labour (and in fact mainly capital, for neither book allows much space for resistance, even from labour) are all there is to it. Soja is the more reticent about setting out a political position, though it is implicit throughout and the quotation cited earlier demonstrated his conviction that what we should be fighting in the West is capitalism, and only capitalism, for via that the problems of sexism and racism would also be confronted. At one point he argues that: 'The political challenge for the postmodern left, as I see it, demands first a recognition and cogent interpretation of the dramatic and often confusing fourth modernization of capitalism' (p. 5). This is necessary, surely, but it is not enough (and though this is labelled 'first' we are not given any more). If there is one thing to be taken on board by the political and social shifts of recent decades it is that, unfortunately maybe, things are just not that simple.

Harvey is much more explicit about his politics. It is absolutely stated that everything must be subordinated to – just as, theoretically, it is reduced to – a question of class. Thus on p. 46 he is discussing ideas, such as Foucault's, which 'appeal to the various social movements that sprang into existence during the 1960s (feminists, gays, ethnic and religious groupings, regional autonomists, etc.)'[!]. But, he argues, such movements leave open 'the question of the path whereby such localized struggles might add up to a progressive, rather than regressive, attack upon the central forms of capitalist exploitation and repression. Localized struggles . . . have not generally had the effect of challenging capitalism . . .' There are two major points here. First, in what sense, precisely, is feminism (to take the case under discussion in this paper) a 'local' struggle while class struggle, it is to be presumed, is 'general'? One can only argue such a

position if it is held that there are no patriarchal structures not reducible to class. Second, and consequently, why is there an assumption that what these 'local' struggles are fighting is capitalism? Surely what feminists are fighting is patriarchy. People, such as myself, may be both feminists and socialists and see themselves trying to struggle on both fronts (though sometimes with despair, as when reading passages such as these). One's identity, and the struggles we are engaged in, are far more multifaceted than Harvey's position is capable of conceiving.

At the end of his book, Harvey pulls together his theoretical and his political positions, arguing for a further development of Marxist formulations. This, surely, is a positive step, and one which I would wholeheartedly support. But as it is spelled out it becomes clear that what this would mean in Harvey's formulation is continued subordination for all those people in parentheses, those who do not in their complex identities match the postulated, uncomplicated-because-unanalysed, universal. Thus, consider the following:

> The importance of recuperating such aspects of social organization as race, gender, religion, within the overall frame of historical materialist enquiry (with its emphasis upon the power of money and capital circulation) and class politics (with its emphasis upon the unity of the emancipatory struggle) cannot be overestimated. (p. 355)

How to have your cake and eat it too! There are four comments. First, I am absolutely in favour of thinking through issues of gender 'within the overall frame of historical materialist enquiry'. Second, however, we have to be sure what that means. Materialism is far wider than an 'emphasis upon the power of money and capital circulation'. This is less materialism than economism; and it simply could not deal even with many of the gender issues raised earlier in this paper. Third, again yes – we need to think through ways of constructing 'the unity of the emancipatory struggle'; but, fourth, this emphatically cannot be achieved by forcing all struggles under 'the overall frame of ... class politics'. What Harvey's position means is a unity enforced through the tutelage of one group over others. As Hadjimichalis and Vaiou have recently written, in the context precisely of debates within our field,

> In a contradictory way, by advocating 'unity' and ignoring divisions (theoretically, practically and prospectively) the left itself has contributed to deepening divisions ... 'Unity' must be gradually built up upon the articulation of differences and individual experiences. (1990, p. 21)

Yet even while he recognizes the need to construct alliances in the search for unity, Harvey forces everyone into one mould: 'The very possibility of a genuine rainbow coalition defines a unified politics which inevitably speaks the tacit language of class, because this is precisely what defines the common experience within the differences' (p. 358). Any on-the-ground experience of trying to build alliances would demonstrate the inadequacy of this view. There is here no understanding of the need to recognize conflicts (remember *Blade Runner*?) and complexity and to deal with them in their own right, as unities which are articulations of genuine and often contradictory differences.

Milton Keynes
published in 1991

Notes

1 But if modernist accounts such as Harvey's miss out resistance and political struggle, this is absolutely not to argue that the majority of postmodernists do the opposite. All those lists of dualist differences between modernism and postmodernism (or Fordism and post-Fordism) obscure the fact that an awful lot remains tediously the same. One of the problems of some postmodernism is its treatment of 'others' as titillating exotica and as primarily constituted, in effect, to affirm the identity of the central character. They are certainly only more rarely represented as active, and actively resisting (see next section; Bondi, 1990; Moore, 1988).

2 Gregory (1990) also makes this point, and analyses its effects, in relation to disciplines other than geography.

3 The critique of geography at that point was very much concerned with bringing in social processes as the explanation of spatial patterns. Various formulations of structural causality, including a structuralist Marxism, were important here. In that context, interestingly enough, introducing social process was emphatically not the same thing as introducing time/history. Indeed, Soja (p. 18) argues that structuralism has been 'one of the twentieth-century's most important avenues for the re-assertion of space in critical social theory'. This seems to me to be an equally problematic formulation. A 'configuration', in the terms in which Foucault and structuralism used it, may be synchronic; but that does not make it spatial. A structuralist perspective can of course be *used* to analyse both history and geography and to link the synchronic with the diachronic; but in some versions it might also be understood as challenging that very dichotomy.

4 To argue this is, in my view, absolutely not to be anti-Marxist, still less is it to be anti-materialist. The point is more that what we are offered in this analysis is a very unreconstructed Marxism.

5 This has already been pointed out in relation to the linear history in *Postmodern Geographies*, and it will be taken up again in later chapters.

6 Most obviously they are taken to task, as in 'mainstream' theory in a number of fields, for heralding now as major discoveries things which feminists have been saying for many years.

7 Interestingly, this sexism extends to the institutions of the art world as well as its practitioners as, argues Chadwick, there has been a reaction against postmodern pluralism. Thus: 'The pluralism of the 1970s has been viewed as a symptom of the disintegration of the set of practices ... through which Modernism was defined. By the late 1970s, a reaction against pluralism, and a backlash against women and minorities, could also be observed within the dominant institutions and discourses of the art world. Exhibitions celebrating the "return" to painting, and focusing on a new generation of male neoexpressionists – for example, David Salle, Julian Schnabel, and Francesco Clemente – were remarkable for their exclusion of virtually all women' (Chadwick, 1990, p. 347). It is also to be remarked that Harvey's selection of a postmodern painting is precisely by one of these artists, and from this period (1980).

8 In this context, it is surprising that Harvey does not even refer to the work of John Berger.

9 And looking at Salle's contribution one could make the same point, of course, about male *post*-modern artists.

10 Once again on references: this article by Pollock is about modernity and space, surely central to Harvey's concerns, yet he does not reference it – the full title is 'Modernity and the spaces of femininity'. She also discusses the presence of the black maid in Manet's painting.

11 Indeed, even if it produced a city for men in the ways enumerated, nineteenth-century urbanization was very important for women, especially for those wanting to live with other women. These impressions and possibilities also, of course, varied by class (see Pollock, 1985; and below), but I am assuming Harvey would readily accept this.

12 George Sand, determined to discover the streets of Paris for herself, had to dress up as a boy to do so (Wolff, 1985, p. 41).

13 But it probably *is* worth noting how similar they appear to be to Baudrillard's as he wanders New York (Baudrillard, 1988). It is something which the great men of modernism and postmodernism seem to share – yet both are held up to us as figures to admire.

14 Thus, the editorial of a recent edition of *Feminist Arts News* contained the following: 'This issue of FAN reveals the complexities and richness of women's work in modernism, practices which redefine modernism itself. The map of modernism as a progressive linear development is replaced with histories of its discontinuities and reformations. No longer a story of how New York replaced Paris, but a dissection of the wholesale theft of African cultures and images, of the silences on women's work, and a long overdue address to Black Women's creativity in, and deconstruction of, modernism' (vol. 3, no. 4).

15 The full quotation is: 'It [the preceding discussion of film] supports the idea that the experience of time–space compression in recent years, under the

pressures of the turn to more flexible modes of accumulation, has generated a crisis of representation in cultural forms, and that this is a subject of intense aesthetic concern, either *in toto* (as I think is the case in *Wings of Desire*) or in part (as would be true of everything from *Blade Runner* to Cindy Sherman's photographs and the novels of Italo Calvino or Pynchon).'

16 One might also ask some serious questions about the social meaning of some of the canonical works of modernism.

17 Indeed, as Kelly has pointed out, perhaps the most crucial aspect of *modernist* art theory is precisely its insistence on signifying 'authorial presence' (Kelly, 1981, cited in Elliott and Wallace, 1990).

18 Harvey has one reference to Hartsock (1987) which he uses simply to take an unsubstantiated swipe at postmodernism. Noting that some authors emphasize 'the opening given in postmodernism to understanding differences and otherness, as well as the liberatory potential it offers for a whole host of new social movements (women, gays, blacks, ecologists, regional autonomists, etc.)'[!] he goes on to assert: 'Curiously, most movements of this sort, though they have definitely helped change "the structure of feeling", pay scant attention to postmodernist arguments, and some feminists (e.g. Hartsock, 1987) are hostile . . .' (p. 48). This is grossly to misrepresent a complex debate. Moreover dissatisfaction with the answers of postmodernism, as I indicated above, does not mean that we are happy to tag along behind an exclusively masculine modernism such as Harvey's.

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11

Politics and Space/Time

'Space' is very much on the agenda these days. On the one hand, from a wide variety of sources come proclamations of the significance of the spatial in these times: 'It is space not time that hides consequences from us' (Berger); 'The difference that space makes' (Sayer); 'that new spatiality implicit in the postmodern' (Jameson); 'it is space rather than time which is the distinctively significant dimension of contemporary capitalism' (Urry); and 'All the social sciences must make room for an increasingly geographical conception of mankind' (Braudel). Even Foucault is now increasingly cited for his occasional reflections on the importance of the spatial. His 1967 Berlin lectures contain the unequivocal: 'The anxiety of our era has to do fundamentally with space, no doubt a great deal more than with time'. In other contexts the importance of the spatial, and of associated concepts, is more metaphorical. In debates around identity the terminology of space, location, positionality and place figures prominently. Homi Bhabha, in discussions of cultural identity, argues for a notion of a 'third space'. Jameson, faced with what he sees as the global confusions of postmodern times, 'the disorientation of saturated space', calls for an exercise in 'cognitive mapping'. And Laclau, in his own very different reflections on the 'new revolution of our time', uses the terms 'temporal' and 'spatial' as the major differentiators between ways of conceptualizing systems of social relations.

In some ways, all this can only be a delight to someone who has long worked as a 'geographer'. Suddenly the concerns, the concepts (or, at least, the *terms*) which have long been at the heart of our discussion are at the centre also of wider social and political debate.

And yet, in the midst of this gratification I have found myself uneasy about the way in which, by some, these terms are used. Here I want to examine just one aspect of these anxieties about some of the current use of spatial terminology – the conceptualization (often implicit) of the term 'space' itself.

In part this concern about what the term 'space' is meant to mean arises simply from the multiplicity of definitions adopted. Many authors rely heavily on the terms space/spatial, and each assumes that their meaning is clear and uncontested. Yet in fact the meaning which different authors assume (and therefore – in the case of metaphorical usage – the import of the metaphor) varies greatly. Buried in these unacknowledged disagreements is a debate which never surfaces; and it never surfaces because everyone assumes we already know what these terms mean. Henri Lefebvre, in the opening pages of his book *The Production of Space*, commented on just this phenomenon: the fact that authors who in so many ways excel in logical rigour will fail to define a term which functions crucially in their argument: 'Conspicuous by its absence from supposedly epistemological studies is ... the idea ... of space – the fact that "space" is mentioned on every page notwithstanding'.[1] At least there ought to be a debate about the meaning of this much-used term.

None the less, had this been all I would probably not have been exercised to write a paper about it. But the problem runs more deeply than this. For among the many and conflicting definitions of space which are current in the literature there are some – and very powerful ones – which deprive it of politics and of the possibility of politics: they effectively de-politicize the realm of the spatial. By no means all authors relegate space in this way. Many, drawing on terms such as centre/periphery/margin, and so on, and examining the 'politics of location', for instance, think of spatiality in a highly active and politically enabling manner. But for others space is the sphere of the lack of politics.

Precisely because the use of spatial terminology is so frequently unexamined this use of the term is not always immediately evident. It dawned fully on me when I read a statement by Ernesto Laclau in his *New Reflections on the Revolution of our Time*. 'Politics and space,' he writes, 'are antinomic terms. Politics only exist insofar as the spatial eludes us'.[2] For someone who, as a geographer, has for years been arguing, along with many others, for a dynamic and politically progressive way of conceptualizing the spatial, this was clearly provocative!

Because my own inquiries were initially stimulated by Laclau's book, and because unearthing the implicit definitions at work implies a detailed reading (which restricts the number of authors who can be considered) this discussion takes *New Reflections* as a starting point, and considers it

in most detail. But, as will become clear, the implicit definition used by Laclau, and which de-politicizes space, is shared by many other authors. In its simpler forms it operates, for instance, in the debate over the nature of structuralism, and is an implicit reference point in many a text. It is, moreover, in certain of its fundamental aspects shared by authors, such as Fredric Jameson, who in other ways are making arguments very different from those of Laclau.

To summarize it rather crudely, Laclau's view of space is that it is the realm of stasis. There is, in the realm of the spatial, no true temporality and thus no possibility of politics. It is on this view, and on a critique of it, that much of the initial discussion will be concentrated. But in other parts of the debate about the nature of the current era, and in particular in relation to 'postmodernity', the realm of the spatial is given entirely different associations from those ascribed to it by Laclau. Thus Jameson, who sees postmodern times as being particularly characterized by the importance of spatiality, interprets it in terms of an unnerving multiplicity: space is chaotic depthlessness.[3] This is the opposite of Laclau's characterization, yet for Jameson it is – once again – a formulation which deprives the spatial of any meaningful politics.

A caveat must be entered from the start. This discussion will be addressing only one aspect of the complex realm which goes by the name of the spatial. Lefebvre, among others, insisted on the importance of considering not only what might be called 'the geometry' of space but also its lived practices and the symbolic meaning and significance of particular spaces and spatializations. Without disagreeing with that, the concentration here will none the less be on the view of space as what I shall provisionally call 'a dimension'. The argument is that different ways of conceptualizing this aspect of 'the spatial' themselves provide very different bases (or in some cases no basis at all) for the politicization of space. Clearly, anyway, the issue of the conceptualization of space is of more than technical interest; it is one of the axes along which we experience and conceptualize the world.

Space and time

An examination of the literature reveals, as might be expected, a variety of uses and meanings of the term 'space', but there is one characteristic of these meanings which is particularly strong and widespread. This is the view of space which, in one way or another, defines it as stasis, and as utterly opposed to time. Laclau, for whom the contrast between what he labels temporal and what he calls spatial is key to his whole argument,

uses a highly complex version of this definition. For him, notions of time and space are related to contrasting methods of understanding social systems. In his *New Reflections on the Revolution of our Time*, Laclau posits that 'any repetition that is governed by a structural law of successions is space' and 'spatiality means coexistence within a structure that establishes the positive nature of all its terms'.[4] Here, then, any postulated causal structure which is complete and self-determining is labelled 'spatial'. This does not mean that such a 'spatial' structure cannot change – it may do – but the essential characteristic is that all the causes of any change which may take place are internal to the structure itself. On this view, in the realm of the spatial there can be no surprises (provided that we are analytically well equipped). In contrast to the closed and self-determining systems of the spatial, time (or temporality) for Laclau takes the form of dislocation, a dynamic which disrupts the predefined terms of any system of causality. The spatial, because it lacks dislocation, is devoid of the possibility of politics.

This is an importantly different distinction between time and space from that which simply contrasts change with an utter lack of movement. In Laclau's version, there can be movement and change within a so-called spatial system; what there cannot be is real dynamism in the sense of a change in the terms of 'the system' itself (which can therefore never be a simply coherent closed system). A distinction is postulated, in other words, between different types of what would normally be called time. On the one hand, there is the time internal to a closed system, where things may change yet without really changing. On the other hand, there is genuine dynamism, Grand Historical Time. In the former is included cyclical time, the times of reproduction, the way in which a peasantry represents to itself (says Laclau) the unfolding of the cycle of the seasons, the turning of the earth. To some extent, too, there is 'embedded time', the time in which our daily lives are set.[5] These times, says Laclau, this kind of 'time' is space.

Laclau's argument here is that what we are inevitably faced with in the world are 'temporal' (by which he means dislocated) structures: dislocation is intrinsic and it is this – this essential openness – which creates the possibility of politics. Any attempt to represent the world 'spatially', including even the world of physical space, is an attempt to ignore that dislocation. Space therefore, in his terminology, is representation, is any (ideological) attempt at closure: 'Society, then, is unrepresentable: any representation – *and thus any space* – is an attempt to constitute society, not to state what it is'. Pure spatiality, in these terms, cannot exist: 'The ultimate failure of all hegemonization [in Laclau's term, spatialization], then, means that the real – including physical space – is in the ultimate instance temporal'; or again: 'the mythical nature of any space'.[6] This does

not mean that the spatial is unimportant. This is not the point at issue, nor is it Laclau's intent. For the 'spatial' as the ideological/mythical is seen by him as itself part of the social and as constitutive of it: 'And insofar as the social is impossible without some fixation of meaning, without the discourse of closure, the ideological must be seen as constitutive of the social'.[7] The issue here is not the relative priority of the temporal and the spatial, but their definition. For it is through this logic, and its association of ideas with temporality and spatiality, that Laclau arrives at the depoliticization of space. 'Let us begin', writes Laclau, 'by identifying three dimensions of the relationship of dislocation that are crucial to our analysis. The *first* is that dislocation is the very form of temporality. And temporality must be conceived as the exact opposite of space. The "spatialization" of an event consists of eliminating its temporality'.[8]

The second and third dimensions of the relationship of dislocation take the logic further: 'The *second* dimension is that dislocation [which, remember, is the antithesis of the spatial] is the very form of possibility' and 'The *third* dimension is that dislocation is the very form of freedom. Freedom is the absence of determination'.[9] This leaves the realm of the spatial looking like unpromising territory for politics. It is lacking in dislocation, the very form of possibility (the form of temporality), which is also 'the very form of freedom'. Within the spatial, there is only determination, and hence no possibility of freedom or of politics.

Laclau's characterization of the spatial is, however, a relatively sophisticated version of a much more general conception of space and time (or spatiality and temporality). It is a conceptualization in which the two are opposed to each other, and in which time is the one which matters and of which History (capital H) is made. Time Marches On but space is a kind of stasis, where nothing really happens.

There are a number of ways in which, it seems to me, this manner of characterizing space and the realm of the spatial is questionable. Three of them, chosen precisely because of their contrasts, because of the distinct light they each throw on the problems of this view of space, will be examined here. The first draws on the debates which have taken place in 'radical geography' over the last two decades and more; the second examines the issue from the point of view of a concern with gender; and the third examines the view from physics.

Radical geography

In the 1970s, the discipline of geography experienced the kinds of developments described by Anderson in 'A culture in contraflow' for other

social sciences.[10] The previously hegemonic positivist 'spatial science' was increasingly challenged by a new generation of Marxist geographers. The argument turned intellectually on how 'the relation between space and society' should be conceptualized. To caricature the debate, the spatial scientists had posited an autonomous sphere of the spatial in which 'spatial relations' and 'spatial processes' produced spatial distributions. The geography of industry, for instance, would be interpreted as simply the result of 'geographical location factors'. Countering this, the Marxist critique was that all these so-called spatial relations and spatial processes were actually social relations taking a particular geographical form. The geography of industry, we argued, could therefore not be explained without a prior understanding of the economy and of wider social and political processes. The aphorism of the seventies was 'space is a social construct'. That is to say – though the point was perhaps not made clearly enough at the time – space is constituted through social relations and material social practices.

But this, too, was soon to seem an inadequate characterization of the social/spatial relation. For while it is surely correct to argue that space is socially constructed, the one-sideness of that formulation implied that geographical forms and distributions were simply outcomes, the endpoint of social explanation. Geographers would thus be the cartographers of the social sciences, mapping the outcomes of processes which could only be explained in other disciplines – sociology, economics, and so forth. What geographers mapped – the spatial form of the social – was interesting enough, but it was simply an end-product: it had no material effect. Quite apart from any demeaning disciplinary implications, this was plainly not the case. The events taking place all around us in the 1980s – the massive spatial restructuring both intra-nationally and internationally as an integral part of the social and economic changes – made it plain that, in one way or another, 'geography matters'. And so, to the aphorism of the 1970s – that space is socially constructed – was added in the 1980s the other side of the coin: that the social is spatially constructed too, and that makes a difference. In other words, and in its broadest formulation, society is necessarily constructed spatially, and that fact – the spatial organization of society – makes a difference to how it works.

But if spatial organization makes a difference to how society works and how it changes, then, far from being the realm of stasis, space and the spatial are also implicated (*contra* Laclau) in the production of history – and thus, potentially, in politics. This was not an entirely new thought; Henri Lefebvre, writing in 1974, was beginning to argue a very similar position:

> The space of capitalist accumulation thus gradually came to life, and began to be fitted out. This process of animation is admiringly referred to as

> history, and its motor sought in all kinds of factors: dynastic interests, ideologies, the ambitions of the mighty, the formation of nation states, demographic pressures, and so on. This is the road to a ceaseless analysing of, and searching for, dates and chains of events. Inasmuch as space is the locus of all such chronologies, might it not constitute a principle of explanation at least as acceptable as any other?[11]

This broad position – that the social and the spatial are inseparable and that the spatial form of the social has causal effecticity – is now accepted increasingly widely, especially in geography and sociology,[12] though there are still those who would disagree, and beyond certain groups even the fact of a debate over the issue seems to have remained unrecognized (Anderson, for example, does not pick it up in his survey).[13] For those familiar with the debate, and who saw in it an essential step towards the politicization of the spatial, formulations of space as a static resultant without any effect – whether the simplistic versions or the more complex definitions such as Laclau's – seem to be very much a retrograde step.

However, in retrospect, even the debates within radical geography have still fully to take on board the implications of our own arguments for the way in which space might be conceptualized.

Issues of gender

For there are also other reservations, from completely different directions, which can be levelled against this view of space and which go beyond the debate which has so far taken place within radical geography. Some of these reservations revolve around issues of gender.

First of all, this manner of conceptualizing space and time takes the form of a dichotomous dualism. It is neither a simple statement of difference (A, B, . . .) nor a dualism constructed through an analysis of the interrelations between the objects being defined (capital: labour). It is a dichotomy specified in terms of a presence and an absence; a dualism which takes the classic form of A/not-A. As was noted earlier, one of Laclau's formulations of a definition is: 'temporality must be conceived as the exact opposite of space'.[14] Now, apart from any reservations which may be raised in the particular case of space and time (and which we shall come to later), the mode of thinking which relies on irreconcilable dichotomies of this sort has in general recently come in for widespread criticism. All the strings of these kinds of opposition with which we are so accustomed to work (mind–body, nature–culture, reason–emotion, and so forth) have been argued to be at heart problematical and a hindrance to either understanding or changing the world. Much of this critique has come from feminists.[15]

The argument is twofold. First, and less importantly here, it is argued that this way of approaching conceptualization is, in western societies and more generally in societies where child-rearing is performed overwhelmingly by members of one sex (women), more typical of males than of females. This is an argument which generally draws on object-relations theory approaches to identity-formation. Second, however, and of more immediate significance for the argument being constructed here, it has been contended that this kind of dichotomous thinking, together with a whole range of the sets of dualisms which take this form (we shall look at some of these in more detail below) are related to the construction of the radical distinction between genders in our society, to the characteristics assigned to each of them, and to the power relations maintained between them. Thus, Nancy Jay, in an article entitled 'Gender and dichotomy' examines the social conditions and consequences of the use of logical dichotomy. She argues not only that logical dichotomy and radical gender distinctions are associated but also, more widely, that such a mode of constructing difference works to the advantage of certain (dominant) social groups, 'that almost any ideology based on A/Not-A dichotomy is effective in resisting change. Those whose understanding of society is ruled by such ideology find it very hard to conceive of the possibility of alternative forms of social order (third possibilities). Within such thinking, the only alternative to the *one* order is disorder'.[16] Genevieve Lloyd, too, in a sweeping history of 'male' and 'female' in western philosophy, entitled *The Man of Reason*, argues that such dichotomous conceptualizations, and – what we shall come to later – the prioritization of one term in the dualism over the other, are not only central to much of the formulation of concepts with which western philosophy has worked but that they are dependent upon, and is instrumental in the conceptualization of, among other things, a particular form of radical distinction between female and male genders.[17] Jay argues that 'Hidden, taken for granted, A/Not-A distinctions are dangerous, and because of their peculiar affinity with gender distinctions, it seems important for feminist theory to be systematic in recognizing them'.[18] The argument is that the definition of 'space' and 'time' under scrutiny here is precisely of this form, and on that basis alone warrants further critical investigation.

But there is also a further point. For within this kind of conceptualization, only one of the terms (A) is defined positively. The other term (not-A) is conceived only in relation to A, and as lacking in A. A fairly thorough reading of some of the recent literature which uses the terminology of space and time, and which employs this form of conceptualization, leaves no doubt that it is time which is conceived of as in the position of 'A', and space which is 'not-A'. Over and over again, time is defined by such things

as change, movement, history, dynamism; while space, rather lamely by comparison, is simply the absence of these things. There are two aspects to this. First, this kind of definition means that it is time, and the characteristics associated with time, which are the primary constituents of both space and time; time is the nodal point, the privileged signifier. And second, this kind of definition means that space is defined by absence, by lack. This is clear in the simple (and often implicit) definitions (time equals change/movement, space equals the lack of these things), but it can also be argued to be the case with more complex definitions such as those put forward by Laclau. For although in a formal sense it is the spatial which in Laclau's formulation is complete and the temporal which marks the lack (the absence of representation, the impossibility of closure), in the whole tone of the argument it is in fact space which is associated with negativity and absence. Thus: 'temporality must be conceived as the exact opposite of space. The "spatialization" of an event consists of eliminating its temporality'.[19]

Now, of course, in current western culture, or in certain of its dominant theories, woman too is defined in terms of lack. Nor, as we shall see, is it entirely a matter of coincidence that space and the feminine are frequently defined in terms of dichotomies in which each of them is most commonly defined as not-A. There is a whole set of dualisms whose terms are commonly aligned with time and space. With time are aligned History, Progress, Civilization, Science, Politics and Reason, portentous things with gravitas and capital letters. With space on the other hand are aligned the other poles of these concepts: stasis, ('simple') reproduction, nostalgia, emotion, aesthetics, the body. All these dualisms, in the way that they are used, suffer from the criticisms made above of dichotomies of this form: the problem of mutual exclusivity and of the consequent impoverishment of both of their terms. Other dualisms could be added which also map on to that between time and space. Jameson, for instance, as do a whole line of authors before him, clearly relates the pairing to that between transcendence and immanence, with the former connotationally associated with the temporal and immanence with the spatial. Indeed, in this and in spite of their other differences, Jameson and Laclau are very similar. Laclau's distinction between the closed, cyclical time of simple reproduction (spatial) and dislocated, changing history (temporal), even if the latter has no inevitability in its progressive movement, is precisely that. Jameson, who bemoans what he characterizes as the tendency towards immanence and the flight from transcendence of the contemporary period, writes of 'a world peculiarly without transcendence and without perspective . . . and indeed without plot in any traditional sense, since all choices would be equidistant and on the same level'[20] – and this is a world where, he

believes, a sense of the temporal is being lost and the realm of the spatial is taking over.

Now, as has been pointed out many times, these dualisms which so easily map on to each other also map on to the constructed dichotomy between female and male. From Rousseau's seeing woman as a potential source of disorder, as needing to be tamed by Reason, to Freud's famous pronouncement that woman is the enemy of civilization, to the many subsequent critics and analysts of such statements of the 'obviousness' of dualisms, of their interrelation one with another, and of their connotations of male and female – such literature is now considerable.[21] And space, in this system of interconnected dualisms, is coded female. '"Transcendence", in its origins, is a transcendence *of* the feminine,' writes Lloyd, for instance.[22] Moreover, even where the transcodings between dualisms have an element of inconsistency, this rule still applies. Thus where time is dynamism, dislocation and History, and space is stasis, space is coded female and denigrated. But where space is chaos (which you would think was quite different from stasis; more indeed like dislocation), then time is Order . . . and space is *still* coded female, only in this context interpreted as threatening.

Elizabeth Wilson, in her book *The Sphinx in the City*, analyses this latter set of connotations.[23] The whole notion of city culture, she argues, has been developed as one pertaining to men. Yet within this context women present a threat, and in two ways. First there is the fact that in the metropolis we are freer, in spite of all the also-attendant dangers, to escape the rigidity of patriarchal social controls which can be so powerful in a smaller community. Second, and following from this, 'women have fared especially badly in western visions of the metropolis because they have seemed to represent disorder. There is fear of the city as a realm of uncontrolled and chaotic sexual licence, and the rigid control of women in cities has been felt necessary to avert this danger'. 'Woman represented feeling, sexuality and even chaos, man was rationality and control'.[24] Among male modernist writers of the early twentieth century, she argues – and with the exception of Joyce – the dominant response to the burgeoning city was to see it as threatening, while modernist women writers (Woolf, Richardson) were more likely to exult in its energy and vitality. The male response was perhaps more ambiguous than this, but it was certainly a mixture of fascination and fear. There is an interesting parallel to be drawn here with the sense of panic in the midst of exhilaration which seems to have overtaken some writers at what they see as the ungraspable (and therefore unbearable) complexity of the post-modern age. And it is an ungraspability seen persistently in spatial terms, whether through the argument that it is the new (seen-to-be-new) time–

space compression, the new global–localism, the breaking down of borders, which is the cause of it all, or through the interpretation of the current period as somehow in its very character intrinsically more spatial than previous eras. In Jameson these two positions are brought together, and he displays the same ambivalence. He writes of 'the horror of multiplicity', of 'all the web threads flung out beyond my "situation" into the unimaginable synchronicity of other people'.[25] It is hard to resist the idea that Jameson's (and others') apparently vertiginous terror (a phrase they often use themselves) in the face of the complexity of today's world (conceived of as social but also importantly as spatial) has a lot in common with the nervousness of the male modernist, nearly a century ago, when faced with the big city.

It is important to be clear about what is being said of this relationship between space/time and gender. It is not being argued that this way of characterizing space is somehow essentially male; there is no essentialism of feminine/masculine here. Rather, the argument is that the dichotomous characterization of space and time, along with a whole range of other dualisms which have been briefly referred to, and with their connotative interrelations, may both reflect and be part of the constitution of, among other things, the masculinity and femininity of the sexist society in which we live. Nor is it being argued that space should simply be reprioritized to an equal status with, or instead of, time. The latter point is important because there have been a number of contributions to the debate recently which have argued that, especially in modernist (including Marxist) accounts, it is time which has been considered the more important. Ed Soja, particularly in his book *Postmodern Geographies*, has made an extended and persuasive case to this effect (but see the critique by Gregory).[26] The story told earlier of Marxism within geography – supposedly the spatial discipline – is indicative of the same tendency. In a completely different context, Terry Eagleton has written in his foreword to Kristin Ross's *The Construction of Social Space* that 'Ross is surely right to claim that this idea [the concept of space] has proved of far less glamorous appeal to radical theorists than the apparently more dynamic, exhilarating notions of narrative and history'.[27] It is interesting to speculate on the degree to which this deprioritization might itself have been part and parcel of the system of gender connotations. Ross herself writes: 'The difficulty is also one of vocabulary, for while words like "historical" and "political" convey a dynamic of intentionality, vitality, and human motivation, "spatial", on the other hand, connotes stasis, neutrality, and passivity';[28] and in her analysis of Rimbaud's poetry and of the nature of its relation to the Paris Commune she does her best to counter that essentially negative view of spatiality. (Jameson, of course, is arguing pretty

much the same point about the past prioritization of time, but his mission is precisely the opposite of Ross's and Soja's; it is to hang on to that prioritization.)

The point here however is not to argue for an upgrading of the status of space within the terms of the old dualism (a project which is arguably inherently difficult anyway, given the terms of that dualism), but to argue that what must be overcome is the very formulation of space/time in terms of this kind of dichotomy. The same point has frequently been made by feminists in relation to other dualisms, most particularly perhaps – because of the debate over the writings of Simone de Beauvoir – the dualism of transcendence and immanence. When de Beauvoir wrote, 'Man's design is not to repeat himself in time: it is to take control of the instant and mould the future. It is male activity that in creating values has made of existence itself a value; this activity has prevailed over the confused forces of life; it has subdued Nature and Woman',[29] she was making precisely that distinction between cyclicity and 'real change' which is not only central to the classic distinction between immanence and transcendence but is also part of the way in which Laclau distinguishes between what he calls the spatial and the temporal. De Beauvoir's argument was that women should grasp the transcendent. A later generation of feminists has argued that the problem is the nature of the distinction itself. The position here is both that the two dualisms (immanence/transcendence and space/time) are related and that the argument about the former dualism could and should be extended to the latter. The next line of critique, the view from physics, provides some further hints about the directions which that reformulation might take.

The view from physics

The conceptualization of space and time under examination here also runs counter to notions of space and time within the natural sciences, and most particularly in physics. Now, in principle, this may not be at all important; it is not clear that strict parallels can or should be drawn between the physical and the social sciences. And indeed there continue to be debates on this subject in the physical sciences. The point is, however, that the view of space and time outlined above already does have, as one of its roots at least, an interpretation drawn – if only implicitly – from the physical sciences. The problem is that it is an outmoded one.

The viewpoint, as used for instance by Laclau, accords with the viewpoint of classical, Newtonian, physics. In classical physics, both space and time exist in their own right, as do objects. Space is a passive arena, the

setting for objects and their interaction. Objects, in turn, exist prior to their interactions and affect one another through force-fields. The observer, similarly, is detached from the observed world. In modern physics, on the other hand, the identity of things is *constituted through* interactions. In modern physics, while velocity, acceleration, and so forth are defined, the basic ontological categories, such as space and time, are not. Even more significantly from the point of view of the argument here, in modern physics, physical reality is conceived of as a 'four-dimensional existence instead of ... the evolution of a three-dimensional existence'.[30] Thus: 'According to Einstein's theory ... space and time are not to be thought of as separate entities existing in their own right – a three-dimensional space, and a one-dimensional time. Rather, the underlying reality consists of a four-dimensional space–time'.[31] Moreover the observer, too, is part of the observed world.

It is worth pausing for a moment to clarify a couple of points here. The first point is that the argument here is not in favour of a total collapse of the differences between something called the spatial and the temporal dimensions. Nor, indeed, would that seem to be what modern physics is arguing either. Rather, the point is that space and time are inextricably interwoven. It is not that we cannot make any distinction at all between them but that the distinction we do make needs to hold the two in tension, and to do so within an overall, and strong, concept of four-dimensionality.

The second point is that the definitions of both space and time in themselves must be constructed as the result of interrelations. This means that there is no question of defining space simply as not-time. It must have a positive definition, in its own terms, just as does time. Space must not be consigned to the position of being conceptualized in terms of absence or lack. It also means, if the positive definitions of both space and time must be interrelational, that there is no absolute dimension, space. The existence of the spatial depends on the interrelations of objects: 'In order for "space" to make an appearance there needs to be at least two fundamental particles'.[32] This is, in fact, saying no more than what is commonly argued, even in the social sciences – that space is not absolute, it is relational. Perhaps the problem at this point is that the implications of this position seem not to have been taken on board.

Now, in some ways all this does seem to have some similarities with Laclau's use of the notion of the spatial, for his definition does refer to forms of social interaction. As we have seen, however, he designates them (or the concepts of them) as spatial only when they form a closed system, where there is a lack of dislocation which can produce a way out of the postulated (but impossible) closure. However, such use of the term is anyway surely metaphorical. What it represents is evidence of the connota-

tions which are being attached to the terms space and spatial. It is not directly talking of 'the spatial' itself. Thus, to take up Laclau's usage in more detail: at a number of points as we have seen he presents definitions of space in terms of possible (in fact, he would argue, impossible) causal structures – 'any repetition that is governed by a structural law of successions is space'; or, 'spatiality means coexistence within a structure that establishes the positive nature of all its terms'.[33] My question of these definitions and of other related ones, both elsewhere in this book and more widely – for instance in the debate over the supposed 'spatiality' of structuralism – is, 'says who?' Is not this appellation in fact pure assertion? Laclau agrees in rejecting the possibility of the actual existence of pure spatiality in the sense of undislocated stasis. A further question must therefore be: why postulate it? Or, more precisely, why postulate it as 'space'? As we have just seen, an answer which proposes an absolute spatial dimension will not do. An alternative answer might be that this ideal pure spatiality, which only exists as discourse/myth/ideology is in fact a (misjudged) metaphor. In this case it is indeed defined by interrelations – this is certainly not 'absolute space', the independently existing dimension – and the interrelations are those of a closed system of social relations, a system outside of which there is nothing and in which nothing will dislocate (temporalize) its internally regulated functioning. But then my question is: why call it space? The use of the term 'spatial' here would seem to be purely metaphorical. In so far as such systems do exist – and even in so far as they are merely postulated as an ideal – they can in no sense *be* simply spatial nor exist only *in* space. In themselves they *constitute* a particular form of space–time.[34]

Moreover, as metaphors the sense of Laclau's formulations goes against what I understand by – and shall argue below would be more helpful to understand by – space/the spatial. 'Any repetition that is governed by a structural law of successions'? – but *is* space so governed? As was argued above, radical geographers reacted strongly in the 1970s precisely against a view of 'a spatial realm', a realm, posited implicitly or explicitly by a wide range of then-dominant practitioners, from mathematicized 'regional scientists' to data-bashers armed with ferociously high regression-coefficients, in which there were spatial processes, spatial laws and purely spatial explanations. In terms of causality, what was being argued by those of us who attacked this view was that the spatial is externally determined. A formulation like the one above, because of the connotations it attaches to the words space/spatial in terms of the nature of causality, thus takes us back a good two decades. Or again, what of the second of Laclau's definitions given above? – that the spatial is the 'coexistence within a structure that establishes the positive nature of all its terms'? What then of

the paradox of simultaneity and the causal chaos of happenstance juxtaposition which are, as we shall argue below (and as Jameson sees), integral characteristics of relational space?

In this procedure, any sort of stasis (for instance a self-regulating structural coherence which cannot lead to any transformation outside its own terms) gets called space/spatial. But there is no reason for this save the prior definition of space as lacking in (this kind of) transformative dynamic *and*, equally importantly, an assumption that anything lacking in (this kind of) dynamism is spatial. Instead, therefore, of using the terms space (and time) in this metaphorical way to refer to such structures why do we not remain with definitions (such as dislocated/undislocated) which refer to the nature of the causal structures themselves? Apart from its greater clarity, this would have the considerable advantage of leaving us free to retain (or maybe to develop) a more positive concept of space.

Indeed, conceptualizing space and time more in the manner of modern physics would seem to be consistent with Laclau's general argument. His whole point about radical historicity is this: 'any effort to spatialize time ultimately fails and space itself becomes an event'. Spatiality in this sense is agreed to be impossible. '"Articulation" ... is the primary ontological level of the constitution of the real', writes Laclau.[35] This is a fundamentally important statement, and one with which I agree. The argument here is thus not opposed to Laclau; rather it is that exactly the same reasoning, and manner of conceptualization, which he applies to the rest of the world, should be applied to space and time as well. It is not that the interrelations between objects occur *in* space and time; it is these relationships themselves which *create/define* space and time.[36]

It is not of course necessary for the social sciences simply to follow the natural sciences in such matters of conceptualization.[37] In fact, however, the views of space and time which are being examined here do, if only implicitly, tend to lean on versions of the world derived from the physical sciences; but the view they rely on is one which has been superseded theoretically. Even so, it is still the case that even in the natural sciences it is possible to use different concepts/theories for different purposes. Newtonian physics is still perfectly adequate for building a bridge. Moreover, there continue to be debates between different parts of physics. What is being argued here is that the social issues which we currently need to understand, whether they be the high-tech postmodern world or questions of cultural identity, require something that would look more like the 'modern physics' view of space. It would, moreover, precisely by introducing into the concept of space that element of dislocation/freedom/possibility, enable the politicization of space/space–time.

An alternative view of space

A first requirement of developing an alternative view of space is that we should try to get away from a notion of society as a kind of 3-D (and indeed more usually 2-D) slice which moves through time. Such a view is often, even usually, implicit rather than explicit, but it is remarkably pervasive. It shows up in the way people phrase things, in the analogies they use. Thus, just briefly to cite two of the authors who have been referred to earlier, Foucault writes: 'We are at a moment, I believe, when our experience of the world is less that of a long life developing through time than that of a network that connects points and intersects with its own skein'[38] and Jameson contrasts 'historiographic deep space or perspectival temporality' with a (spatial) set of connections which 'lights up like a nodal circuit in a slot machine'.[39] The aim here is not to disagree in total with these formulations, but to indicate what they imply. What they both point to is, on the one hand, a contrast between temporal movement and, on the other, a notion of space as instantaneous connections between things at one moment. For Jameson, the latter type of (inadequate) history-telling has replaced the former. And if this is true then it is indeed inadequate. But while the contrast – the shift in balance – to which both authors are drawing attention is a valid one, in the end the notion of space as *only* systems of simultaneous relations, the flashing of a pin-ball machine, is inadequate. For, of course, the temporal movement is also spatial; the moving elements have spatial relations to one another. And the 'spatial' interconnections which flash across can only be constituted temporally as well. Instead of linear process counterposed to flat surface (which anyway reduces space from three to two dimensions), it is necessary to insist on the irrefutable four-dimensionality (indeed n-dimensionality) of things. Space is not static, nor time spaceless. Of course spatiality and temporality are different from each other but neither can be conceptualized as the absence of the other. The full implications of this will be elaborated below, but for the moment the point is to try to think in terms of all the dimensions of space–time. It is a lot more difficult than at first sight it might seem.

Second, we need to conceptualize space as constructed out of interrelations, as the simultaneous coexistence of social interrelations and interactions at all spatial scales, from the most local level to the most global. Earlier it was reported how, in human geography, the recognition that the spatial is socially constituted was followed by the perhaps even more powerful (in the sense of the breadth of its implications) recognition that the social is necessarily spatially constituted too. Both points (though perhaps in reverse order) need to be grasped at this moment. On the one

hand, all social (and indeed physical) phenomena/activities/relations have a spatial form and a relative spatial location. The relations which bind communities, whether they be 'local' societies or worldwide organizations; the relations within an industrial corporation; the debt relations between the South and the North; the relations which result in the current popularity in European cities of music from Mali. The spatial spread of social relations can be intimately local or expansively global, or anything in between. Their spatial extent and form also changes over time (and there is considerable debate about what is happening to the spatial form of social relations at the moment). But, whatever way it is, there is no getting away from the fact that the social is inexorably also spatial.

The proposition here is that this fact be used to define the spatial. Thus, the spatial is socially constituted. 'Space' is created out of the vast intricacies, the incredible complexities, of the interlocking and the non-interlocking, and the networks of relations at every scale from local to global. What makes a particular view of these social relations specifically spatial is their simultaneity. It is a simultaneity, also, which has extension and configuration. But simultaneity is absolutely not stasis. Seeing space as a moment in the intersection of configured social relations (rather than as an absolute dimension) means that it cannot be seen as static. There is no choice between flow (time) and a flat surface of instantaneous relations (space). Space is not a 'flat' surface in that sense because the social relations which create it are themselves dynamic by their very nature. It is a question of a manner of thinking. It is not the 'slice through time' which should be the dominant thought but the simultaneous coexistence of social relations that cannot be conceptualized as other than dynamic. Moreover, and again as a result of the fact that it is conceptualized as created out of social relations, space is by its very nature full of power and symbolism, a complex web of relations of domination and subordination, of solidarity and co-operation. This aspect of space has been referred to elsewhere as a kind of 'power-geometry'.[40]

Third, this in turn means that the spatial has *both* an element of order *and* an element of chaos (or maybe it is that we should question that dichotomy also). It cannot be defined on one side or the other of the mutually exclusive dichotomies discussed earlier. Space has order in two senses. First, it has order because all spatial locations of phenomena are caused; they can in principle be explained. Second, it has order because there are indeed spatial systems, in the sense of sets of social phenomena in which spatial arrangement (that is, mutual relative positioning rather than 'absolute' location) itself is part of the constitution of the system. The spatial organization of a communications network, or of a supermarket chain with its warehousing and distribution points and retail outlets would

both be examples of this, as would the activity space of a multinational company. There is an integral spatial coherence here, which constitutes the geographical distributions and the geographical form of the social relations. The spatial form was socially 'planned', in itself directly socially caused, that way. But there is also an element of 'chaos' which is intrinsic to the spatial. For although the location of each (or a set) of a number of phenomena may be directly caused (we know why X is here and Y is there) the spatial positioning of one in relation to the other (X's location in relation to Y) may not be directly caused. Such relative locations are produced out of the independent operation of separate determinations. They are in that sense 'unintended consequences'. Thus, the chaos of the spatial results from the happenstance juxtapositions, the accidental separations, the often paradoxical nature of the spatial arrangements which result from the operation of all these causalities. Both Mike Davis and Ed Soja, for instance, point to the paradoxical mixtures, the unexpected land uses side by side, within Los Angeles. Thus, the relation between social relations and spatiality may vary between that of a fairly coherent system (where social and spatial form are mutually determinant) and that where the particular spatial form is not directly socially caused at all.

This has a number of significant implications. To begin with, it takes further the debate with Ernesto Laclau. For in this conceptualization space is essentially disrupted. It is, indeed, 'dislocated' and necessarily so. The simultaneity of space as defined here in no way implies the internally coherent closed system of causality which is dubbed 'spatial' in his *Reflections*. There is no way that 'spatiality' in this sense 'means coexistence within a structure that establishes the positive nature of all its terms'.[41] The spatial, in fact, precisely *cannot* be so. And this means, in turn, that the spatial too is open to politics.

But, further, neither does this view of space accord with Fredric Jameson's which, at first sight, might seem to be the opposite of Laclau's. In Jameson's view the spatial does indeed, as we have seen, have a lot to do with the chaotic. While for Laclau spatial discourses are the attempt to represent (to pin down the essentially unmappable), for Jameson the spatial is precisely unrepresentable – which is why he calls for an exercise in 'mapping' (though he acknowledges the procedure will be far more complex than cartography as we have known it so far). In this sense, Laclau and Jameson, both of whom use the terms space/spatiality with great frequency, and for both of whom the concepts perform an important function in their overall schemas, have diametrically opposed interpretations of what the terms actually mean. Yet for both of them their concepts of spatiality work against politics. While for Laclau it is the essential orderliness of the spatial (as he defines it) which means the death of

history and politics, for Jameson it is the chaos (precisely, the dislocation) of (his definition of) the spatial which apparently causes him to panic, and to call for a map.

So this difference between the two authors does not imply that, since the view of the spatial proposed here is in disagreement with that of Laclau, it concords with that of Jameson. Jameson's view is in fact equally problematical for politics, although in a different way. Jameson labels as 'space' what he sees as unrepresentable (thus the 'crisis of representation' and the 'increasing spatialization' are to him inextricably associated elements of postmodern society). In this, he perhaps unknowingly recalls an old debate within geography which goes by the name of 'the problem of geographical description'. Thus, thirty years ago H.C. Darby, an eminent figure in the geography of his day, ruminated:

> A series of geographical facts is much more difficult to present than a sequence of historical facts. Events follow one another in time in an inherently dramatic fashion that makes juxtaposition in time easier to convey through the written word than juxtaposition in space. Geographical description is inevitably more difficult to achieve successfully than is historical narrative.[42]

Such a view, however, depends on the notion that the difficulty of geographical description (as opposed to temporal story-telling) arises in part because in space you can go off in any direction and in part because in space things which are next to one another are not necessarily connected. However, not only does this reduce space to unrepresentable chaos, it is also extremely problematical in what it implies for the notion of *time*. And this would seem on occasions to be the case for Jameson too. For, while space is posed as the unrepresentable, time is thereby, at least implicitly and at those moments, *counterposed* as the comforting security of a story it is possible to tell. This of course clearly reflects a notion of the difference between time and space in which time has a coherence and logic to its telling, while space does not. It is the view of time which Jameson might, according to some of his writings, like to see restored: time/History in the form of the Grand Narrative.[43]

However, this is also a view of temporality, as sequential coherence, which has come in for much questioning. The historical in fact can pose similar problems of representation to the geographical. *Moreover*, and ironically, it is precisely this view of history which Laclau would term spatial:

> with inexorable logic it then follows that there can be no dislocation possible in this process. If everything that happens can be explained

> *internally* to this world, nothing can be a mere event (which entails a radical temporality, as we have seen) and everything acquires an absolute intelligibility within the grandiose scheme of a pure spatiality. This is the Hegelian–Marxist moment.[44]

Further still, what is crucially wrong with both these views is that they are simply opposing space and time. For both Laclau and Jameson time and space are causal closure/representability on the one hand and unrepresentability on the other. They simply differ as to which is which! What unites them, and what I argue should be questioned, is the very counterposition in this way of space and time. It is a counterposition which makes it difficult to think the social in terms of the real multiplicities of space–time. This is an argument which is being made forcefully in debates over cultural identity: '... ethnic identity and difference are socially produced in the here and now, not archeologically salvaged from the disappearing past';[45] and Homi Bhabha inquires,

> Can I just clarify that what to me is problematic about the understanding of the 'fundamentalist' position in the Rushdie case is that it is *represented* as archaic, almost medieval. It may sound very strange to us, it may sound absolutely absurd to some people, but the point is that the demands over *The Satanic Verses* are being made *now*, out of a particular political state that is functioning very much in our time ...[46]

Those who focus on what they see as the terrifying simultaneity of today, would presumably find such a view of the world problematical, and would long for such 'ethnic identities' and 'fundamentalisms' to be (re)placed in the past so that one story of progression between differences, rather than an account of the production of a number of different differences at one moment in time, could be told. That this cannot be done is the real meaning of the contrast between thinking in terms of three dimensions plus one and recognizing fully the inextricability of the four dimensions together. What used to be thought of as 'the problem of geographical description' is actually the more general difficulty of dealing with a world which is 4-D.

But all this leads to a fourth characteristic of an alternative view of space, as part of space–time. For precisely that element of the chaotic, or dislocated, which is intrinsic to the spatial has effects on the social phenomena which constitute it. Spatial form as 'outcome' (the happenstance juxtapositions and so forth) has emergent powers which can have effects on subsequent events. Spatial form can alter the future course of the very histories which have produced it. In relation to Laclau what this means, ironically, is that one of the sources of the dislocation, on the

existence of which he (in my view correctly) insists, is precisely the spatial. The spatial (in my terms) is precisely one of the sources of the temporal (in his terms). In relation to Jameson the (at least partial) chaos of the spatial (which he recognizes) is precisely one of the reasons why the temporal is not, and cannot be, so tidy and monolithic a tale as he might wish. One way of thinking about all this is to say that the spatial is integral to the production of history, and thus to the possibility of politics, just as the temporal is to geography. Another way is to insist on the inseparability of time and space, on their joint constitution through the interrelations between phenomena; on the necessity of thinking in terms of space–time.

Mexico City
published in 1992

Notes

1 H. Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford, Blackwell 1991), p. 3.
2 E. Laclau, *New Reflections on the Revolution of our Time* (London, Verso, 1990), p. 68. Thanks to Ernesto Laclau for many long discussions during the writing of this article.
3 F. Jameson, *Postmodernism; or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (London, Verso, 1991).
4 Laclau, *New Reflections*, pp. 41, 69.
5 Ibid., p. 42. See, for instance, the discussion in M. Rustin, 'Place and time in socialist theory', *Radical Philosophy*, no. 47, 1987, pp. 30–6.
6 Laclau, *New Reflections*, pp. 82 (my emphasis), 42, 68.
7 Laclau, *New Reflections*, p. 92. And in this sense, of course, it could be said that Laclau's space is 'political' because any representation is political. But this is the case only in the sense that *different* spaces, different 'cognitive mappings', to borrow Jameson's terminology, can express different political stances. It still leaves each space – and thus the concept of space – as characterized by closure and immobility, as containing no sense of the open, creative possibilities for political action/effectivity. Space is the realm of the discourse of closure, of the fixation of meaning.
8 Laclau, *New Reflections*, p. 41 (my emphasis).
9 Ibid., pp. 42, 43 (my emphases).
10 P. Anderson, 'A culture in contraflow', *New Left Review*, no. 180, pp. 41–78; and no. 182, pp. 85–137.
11 Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, p. 275.
12 See, for instance, D. Massey, *Spatial Divisions of Labour: Social Structures and the Geography of Production* (Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1984); D. Gregory and J. Urry (eds), *Social Relations and Spatial Structures* (Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1985); and E. Soja, *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory* (Verso, London, 1989).

13 It should be noted that the argument that 'the spatial' is particularly important in the current era is a different one from the one being made here. The argument about the nature of postmodernity is an empirical one about the characteristics of these times. The argument developed within geography was an in-principle position concerning the nature of explanation, and the role of the spatial within this.
14 Laclau, *New Reflections*, p. 41.
15 See, for instance, J. Flax, 'Political philosophy and the patriarchal unconscious: a psychoanalytic perspective on epistemology and metaphysics', in S. Harding and M.B. Hintikka (eds), *Discovering Reality: Feminist Perspectives on Epistemology, Metaphysics, Methodology, and Philosophy of Science* (Dordrecht, Reidel, 1983), pp. 245–81. And in the same volume, the Introduction by Harding and Hintikka (pp. ix–xix), and L. Lange, 'Woman is not a rational animal: on Aristotle's biology of reproduction', pp. 1–15. Also J. Flax, 'Postmodernism and gender relations in feminist theory', in L.J. Nicholson (ed.), *Feminism/Postmodernism* (London, Routledge, 1990), pp. 39–62 and N. Hartsock, 'Foucault on power: a theory for women?', in the same volume, pp. 157–75.
16 N. Jay, 'Gender and dichotomy', *Feminist Studies*, 7, no. 1, 1981 (Spring), pp. 38–56, here p. 54.
17 G. Lloyd, *The Man of Reason: 'Male' and 'Female' in Western Philosophy* (London, Methuen, 1984).
18 Jay, 'Gender and dichotomy', p. 47.
19 Laclau, *New Reflections*, p. 41.
20 Jameson, *Postmodernism*, p. 269.
21 See, for instance, D. Dinnerstein, *The Rocking of the Cradle and the Ruling of the World* (London, Women's Press, 1987); M. le Dœuff, *Hipparchia's Choice: An Essay Concerning Women, Philosophy, etc.* (Oxford, Blackwell, 1991); and Lloyd, *The Man of Reason*.
22 Lloyd, *The Man of Reason*, p. 101.
23 E. Wilson, *The Sphinx in the City: Urban Life, the Control of Disorder, and Women* (London, Virago, 1991).
24 Wilson, *The Sphinx in the City*, pp. 157, 87.
25 Jameson, *Postmodernism*, pp. 363, 362.
26 Soja, *Postmodern Geographies*; and D. Gregory, 'Chinatown, part three? Soja and the missing spaces of social theory', *Strategies*, no. 3, 1990.
27 T. Eagleton, Foreword to K. Ross, *The Emergence of Social Space: Rimbaud and the Paris Commune* (Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1988), p. xii.
28 Ross, *The Emergence of Social Space*, p. 8.
29 S. de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, transl. H.M. Parshley (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1972), p. 97.
30 R. Stannard, *Grounds for Reasonable Belief* (Edinburgh, Scottish Academic Press, 1989).
31 Ibid., p. 35.
32 Ibid., p. 33.
33 Laclau, *New Reflections*, pp. 41, 69.

34 An alternative explanation of why such structures are labelled spatial is available. Moreover it is an explanation which relates also to the much wider question (although in fact it is rarely questioned) of why structuralist thought, or certain forms of it, has so often been dubbed spatial. This is that, since such structures are seen to be non-dynamic systems, they are argued to be non-temporal. They are static, and thus lacking in a time dimension. So, by a knee-jerk response they are called spatial. Similarly with the distinction between diachrony and synchrony. Because the former is sometimes seen as temporal, its 'opposite' is automatically characterized as spatial (although in fact not by Laclau, for whom certain forms of diachrony may also be 'spatial' – see p. 42). This, however, returns us to the critique of a conceptualization of space simply and only in terms of a lack of temporality. Atemporality is not a sufficient, or satisfactory, definition of the spatial. Things can be static without being spatial – the assumption, noted earlier, that anything lacking a transformative dynamic is spatial can not be maintained in positive terms; it is simply the (unsustainable) result of associating transformation solely with time. Moreover, while a particular synchrony (synchronic form) may have spatial characteristics, in its extension and configuration, that does not mean that it is a sufficient definition of space/spatial itself.

35 Laclau, *New Reflections*, pp. 84, 184.

36 Stannard, *Grounds for Reasonable Belief*, p. 33.

37 However, the social sciences deal with physical space too. All material phenomena, including social phenomena, are spatial. Any definition of space must include reference to its characteristics of extension, exclusivity, juxtaposition, and so on. Moreover, not only do the relationships between these phenomena create/define space–time but also the spacing (and timing) of phenomena enables and constrains the relationships themselves. Thus, it *is* necessary for social science to be at least consistent with concepts of physical space, although a social-science concept could also have additional features. The implications for the analysis of 'natural' space – of physical geography – are similar. Indeed, as Laclau argues, even physical space is temporal and therefore in his own lexicon not spatial: 'the real – including physical space – is in the ultimate instance temporal' (pp. 41–2). While I disagree with the labelling as spatial and temporal I agree with the sense of this – but why only 'in the ultimate instance'?!

38 M. Foucault, 'Of other spaces', *Diacritics*, Spring, 1986, pp. 22–7, here p. 22.

39 Jameson, *Postmodernism*, p. 374.

40 D. Massey, 'Power-geometry and a progressive sense of place', in J. Bird, B. Curtis, T. Putnam, G. Robertson and L. Tickner (eds), *Mapping the Futures* (London, Routledge, 1993).

41 Laclau, *New Reflections*, p. 69.

42 H.C. Darby, 'The problem of geographical description', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, vol. 30, 1962, pp. 1–14; here p. 2.

43 I am hesitant here in interpreting Jameson because, inevitably, his position has developed over the course of his work. I am sure that he would not in fact see narrative as unproblematic. Yet the counterposition of it to his concept

of spatiality, and the way in which he formulates that concept, does lead, in those parts of his argument, to that impression being given.

44 Laclau, *New Reflections*, p. 75.

45 M.P. Smith, 'Postmodernism, urban ethnography, and the new social space of ethnic identity', forthcoming in *Theory and Society*.

46 In 'Interview with Homi Bhabha', in J. Rutherford (ed.), *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference* (London, Lawrence & Wishart, 1990), pp. 207–21, here p. 215. At this point, as at a number of others, the argument links up with the discussion by Peter Osborne in his 'Modernity is a qualitative, not a chronological, category', *New Left Review*, no. 192, pp. 65–84.

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